

Hafa Adai!

JGO: Torres' request for non-NMI judge to hear his lawsuit is absurd. **PAGE 3**
'12,000 CUC accounts received utilities stimulus' **PAGE 3**

\$1

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Torres is impeached

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

As expected and after a lengthy session, the Democratic Party-controlled House of Representatives approved yesterday the six articles of impeachment against Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, making him the second governor in CNMI history to be impeached.

See **TORRES** on **Page 4**



Rep. Leila Staffler (D-Saipan) gestures as she talks with Reps. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan) and Donald Manglona (Ind-Rota) after the conclusion of the House of Representatives' session yesterday, in which the House of Representatives voted to impeach Gov. Ralph DLG Torres. **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**

'I'm one step closer to my dream'

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

After flying over 100 miles solo at just 16 years old, Guam's Lawrence C. Limtiaco says all the challenges he and his family faced to

See **DREAM** on **Page 4**



Guam's Lawrence C. Limtiaco became one of the youngest pilots to fly solo from Guam to Saipan at just 16 years old. He is now en route to becoming a naval aviator. **EUGENE HERRERA**

33 new cases ID'd in NMI

By **JOSHUA SANTOS**
joshua_santos@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A total of 33 individuals have been confirmed positive for COVID-19, according to the

- » **Tinian is 99.8% vaccinated**
- » **Guam logs 273rd COVID-related death**
- » **938 new cases in Guam in 2 days**

Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., even as Tinian reported having the highest COVID-19 vaccination rate in the CNMI at 99.8%.

In its COVID-19 update
See **COVID** on **Page 4**

AT A GLANCE

As of 5:04pm, Jan. 12, 2022

VACCINATIONS IN THE CNMI

Eligible Population **97.3%**
Fully Vaccinated: **97.3%**

Days since last community transmission **2**

Pfizer/BioNTech	
Initiated:	37,078
Fully Vaccinated:	35,704
Moderna	
Initiated:	5,298
Fully Vaccinated:	5,106
Janssen	
Fully vaccinated:	1,117

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	21,118	938	22,056
Recovered	19,167	63	19,230
Active	1,615	422	2,553
Deaths	272	1	273

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	3,665	33	3,698
Traced via Travel Screening	372	3	375
Traced via Community Screening	3,293	30	3,323
Deaths	20	0	20

*1/12=516; 1/11=422

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., <https://www.vaccinatecnmi.com/vax-dashboard/>

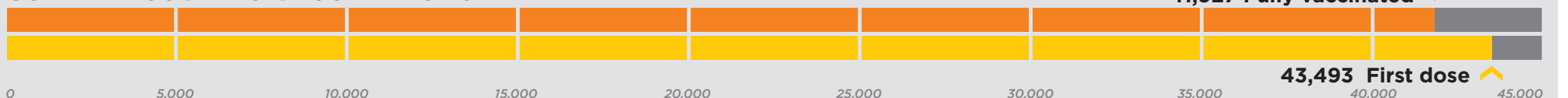
COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:

- Red: Least safe
- Orange
- Yellow
- Blue
- Green: Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

CURRENT COVID-19 VACCINATIONS



INSIDE



NATION

A pilot crash-landed a medical helicopter Tuesday without loss of life in a residential area.

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ASIA

Six people are missing after a high-rise building that was under construction collapsed.

PAGE 13



WORLD

Poland becomes the latest European nation to record 100,000 deaths related to coronavirus.

PAGE 13



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GOT A NEWS TIP?

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American Red Cross-NMI Chapter board members, McDonald's of Guam and Saipan president and CEO Jose C. Ayuyu, second from left; McDonald's of Guam and Saipan vice president Marcia E. Ayuyu, fourth from left, and others share a photo yesterday at McDonald's Middle Road location. Holding the check is executive director of the American Red Cross-NMI Chapter John Hirsh and American Red Cross-NMI Chapter board chair Mable Glenn.

JOSHUA SANTOS

McDonald's donates \$10K to the Red Cross for 'Gala'

By JOSHUA SANTOS
joshua_santos@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

McDonald's of Guam and Saipan handed over a \$10,000 check yesterday to the American Red Cross-Northern Mariana Islands Chapter that will go toward the chapter's "Red Cross Gala" on Feb. 26.

This donation makes McDonald's of Guam and Saipan the event's first donor, and is so far the event's first "Lifetime Achievement" sponsor—the highest tier of sponsors for the gala.

Present for the handoff was American Red Cross-NMI Chapter board members, McDonald's of Guam and Saipan president and chief executive officer Jose C. Ayuyu, and McDonald's of Guam and Saipan vice president Marcia E. Ayuyu.

Jose Ayuyu lauded the Red Cross for its work, especially during times of disaster in the CNMI, and hoped that the donation will inspire other companies to contribute to the Red Cross, and encouraged the community to donate whatever they can to the Red Cross and its causes.

"This morning is a very important morning for us, because we're making a big—or small—contribution to an organization that has been in our islands for many, many years. ... They do such important work in our community, [and] without them it would be very difficult for the community to recover in times of disaster," said Jose Ayuyu. "I hope that this amount will lead other com-

panies to follow our suit in [helping] out the Red Cross.

"...I appeal really to the companies on Saipan to be part of our community in terms of assisting the Red Cross."

Marcia E. Ayuyu thanked the Red Cross for all it does for the community and thanked all who were present for the check handoff for coming out. "Our donation really shows that we're here for our community and we're here for the Red Cross," she said.

John Hirsh, executive director of the American Red Cross-NMI Chapter, expressed his gratitude to Jose Ayuyu and his family for their continued support.

"This is such an exceptional gift [and we] just can't thank the Ayuyu family enough for your generosity year in and year out. ... You've had a long history of philanthropy in the community and giving back to the community, and we're just so proud at the Red Cross that you value the work that we're doing," said Hirsh.

The first "Red Cross Gala" is set for Feb. 26 at Kensington Hotel Saipan. It will be an exclusive, Hollywood-themed event celebrating the Red Cross' 43 years of humanitarian work in the CNMI.

For those interested in sponsoring the event and having tables/seats at the gala, the American Red Cross-NMI Chapter asks you to email board chair Mable Glenn at mable.glenn@redcross.org or call the NMI chapter office at 670-234-3459.

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JGO: Torres' request for non-NMI judge to hear his lawsuit is absurd

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The House of Representatives Committee on Judiciary and Governmental Operations described as “absurd” Gov. Ralph DLG Torres’ request to appoint a non-NMI judge to hear his lawsuit against the committee.

In the motion to dismiss Torres’ lawsuit, the JGO, through counsels Brendan Layde and Joseph Tajeron Jr., also opposed the governor’s request for a non-NMI judge to preside in this lawsuit.

“Judges in all jurisdictions are sometimes called upon to adjudicate disputes between the other branches of government. To assert categorically that no judge in an entire jurisdiction, current or former, could do so impartially is

frankly absurd. The JGO committee has full faith and confi-

dence in the integrity and impartiality of the CNMI bench,

past and present,” Layde and Tajeron state.

In addition, the JGO noted that Torres did not officially

file a motion opposing the

See JGO on Next Page

‘12K CUC accounts received vouchers’

Of a total of 12,682 electric accounts that the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. has identified, 12,000 accounts have already been credited a \$500 utilities voucher for the month of December, according to Commonwealth Utilities Corp. executive director Gary Camacho yesterday.

Camacho also made clear that the Department of Finance was the funding source for the “utilities stimulus” and that DOF provided CUC with restrictions and requirements for what accounts qualify and do not qualify for the \$500 voucher.

“Department of Finance was the funding source for the stimulus [and] they also provided us the restrictions and requirements to qualify for that. [Accounts] have to be an active account, and had to have an electrical account. Those are the requirements, along with a few others,” said Camacho.

Saipan Tribune reported last month that CUC, through a collaboration with the Department of Finance, was working on crediting residential account holders \$500 for the month of December. CUC began crediting accounts with \$500 vouchers last Dec. 10.

In a December interview with Finance Secretary David DLG Atalig, he said that \$7.5 million in American Rescue Plan Act funding was allocated for the “utilities stimulus” and that it was a part of the CNMI government’s spending plan for the ARPA funding. (Joshua Santos)

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2017 KIA SPORTAGE EX  SALE PRICE \$18,995 • 51,470 MILES • STK: 17P372 • KBB: \$23,611	2017 HYUNDAI TUCSON GL  SALE PRICE \$18,995 • 62,261 MILES • STK: 17P365 • KBB: \$19,752	2018 MAZDA CX-5 SPORT  SALE PRICE \$22,995 • 13,002 MILES • STK: 22M002A • KBB: \$22,440	2013 TOYOTA FJ CRUISER 4WD  SALE PRICE \$37,995 • 85,000 MILES • STK: 13P359
2015 TOYOTA CAMRY XLE  SALE PRICE \$18,995 • 47,200 MILES • STK: 15P325 • KBB: \$20,295	2020 MITSUBISHI MIRAGE G4  SALE PRICE \$18,995 • 18,418 MILES • STK: 20R277 • KBB: \$16,607	2015 JEEP WRANGLER SPORT  SALE PRICE \$27,995 • 70,502 MILES • STK: 5P279 • KBB: \$32,299	2019 HONDA RIDGELINE RTL-E-AWD  SALE PRICE \$43,995 • 34,455 MILES • STK: 19P367 • KBB: \$47,459
2018 MAZDA MAZDA3 SPORT  SALE PRICE \$18,995 • 8,692 MILES • STK: 8HS889 • KBB: \$19,496	2018 MAZDA MAZDA3 SPORT  SALE PRICE \$18,995 • 10,785 MILES • STK: 18HS888 • KBB: \$19,353	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">    </div> <p style="text-align: center;">ONLINE SHOPPER WWW.TRIPLEJSAIPAN.COM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CLICK PICK DRIVE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">GETTING BACK TO BUSINESS IS NOW FASTER AND EASIER!</p>	



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OAG opposes early release for man convicted of murder

By **KIMBERLY B. ESMORES**
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Office of the Attorney General criminal division has issued a memo to the CNMI Board of Parole strongly opposing parole for a man who was convicted of first-degree murder in 2006.

According to OAG Chief Prosecutor Chester Hinds, the OAG greatly opposes the grant of parole to Francisco Pua Aguon, who was found guilty by jury trial and sentenced to serve a 50-year sentence for the charge of murder in the first degree.

Aguon, who has already served over 30 years of his sentence, is applying for parole and is set to face the CNMI Board of Parole today at 9am.

"This type of crime should be a very strong aggravating factor during the parole decision. We respectfully request that his application be denied. We believe the inmate is not suitable for parole. The inmate has only served 16 years of his sentence as of Jan. 12, 2022, and has over 33 years of his remaining sentence on this heinous crime, the most serious offense we face as a society," Hinds said.

He said it is necessary for Aguon to remain incarcerated to serve as an example for others that murder is not tolerated.

"This type of deviant behavior demands significant incarceration to prevent the possibility of other acts of violence, and also to serve as a deterrent to others in the community that such behavior ultimately will not be tolerated. The consequences of the inmate's actions in committing such a fatal and brutal crime should ultimately be a reminder that justice to the victim, his family, the community, and to the Commonwealth must be served to his full sentence and nothing less," he said. "Most of all, the Commonwealth would like to remind the board that the inmate walked free for three years before he was formally brought before the court. Therefore, the Commonwealth expresses its utmost concern over granting the inmates eligibility for parole given the severity of the nature of the offense and the depravity of the inmates' act."

In addition, Hinds argues that Aguon poses a serious threat to the community therefore he should not be granted parole. "[Aguon] poses as a threat to the safety and welfare of the Commonwealth. Our position before the board for early release on parole is very clear, especially for felonious crimes resulting in acts of murder, that the inmate needs to serve the full maximum sentence imposed as part of his sentencing to hopefully deter him from any future criminal activity. The loss of a life can never be recovered or compensated, and most of all, the family of the victim of this horrific offense deserve absolute justice. Anything less than the full sentence does not serve that purpose, nor does

Rota Centron Hustisia closed today, tomorrow

On Jan. 7, 2022, the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. issued a public advisory regarding islandwide water service interruption for Rota on Jan. 13 and 14, 2022. Due to this and as a precautionary measure to ensure sanitary conditions during the pandemic, the Rota Centron Hustisia will be closed today, Jan. 13, and Friday, Jan. 14, 2022.

Rota Centron Hustisia will remain closed on Monday, Jan. 17, 2022 in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and regular business hours will resume on Tuesday, Jan. 18, 2022.

While facilities are closed, Judiciary personnel may be teleworking or activated for emergency and essential services. Bail, family protec-

tion, emergency and time-sensitive hearings may be set consistent with Supreme Court Order 2022-ADM-0001-MS (COVID-19 Order No. 17) or the latest order thereof and subsequent court orders. Visit the Judiciary's website at www.nmijudiciary.com for court information and www.cnmilaw.org to review the Order. (PR)

DREAM

From Page 1

get to where he is today is all worth it because he's now just a few steps away from achieving his dream of becoming a naval aviator.

Limtiaco, a junior at Fr. Duenas High School in Guam, has made it farther than many could only hope and dream at such a young age. At the tender age of 16, he not only made it as one of youngest pilots to fly from

Guam to Saipan but he has also satisfied one of the key requirements needed to obtain his pilot license, which, in turn, would be valuable in his quest to becoming a naval aviator.

Limtiaco, who made his first solo flight from Guam to Saipan last Sunday, Jan. 9, 2022, completed the first of the four flights that is required in order to obtain a private pilot license. Upon touchdown on Saipan in a Cessna 172P, Limtiaco flew to Rota, and returned to Guam afterward

to conclude his solo flight at 12:14pm Sunday. He will be making a second cross country solo flight on Saturday, Jan. 15, 2022, following the same route.

When asked what he had to say about his 112-mile flight to Saipan, Lamtiaco said it was just fun to get it over with. "I felt it was fun and it was very adventurous. It was a very long three hours just sitting in the plane, but it felt fun to get it over with," he said.

Still, he acknowledged that

he felt a little nervous while en route to Saipan. "I was nervous. I was thinking whether I'd make it to Saipan or not. I was thinking of mostly flying and preparing for anything that could happen," he said.

After complying with all the flight requirements, all Limtiaco needs to do is complete a Federal Aviation Administration written test and wait for his 17th birthday.

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com

TORRES

From Page 1

Next step is for the CNMI Senate to hold a trial. Contrary to what many believe, Torres' impeachment doesn't automatically mean his removal from office. The Senate will "hear" the case, with House lawmakers acting as prosecutors.

With 15 "yes" votes, four "no" votes, and one abstention, the House passed House Resolution 22-14 yesterday, impeaching Torres for alleged commission of felonies, corruption, and neglect of duty, in violation of Article III, Section 19 of the CNMI Constitution.

With the same votes, the House adopted the House resolution that has six articles of impeachment charging the governor with committing felony of theft of utility services, committing felony theft, corruption for unlawful first-class and busi-

ness-class travel, corruption for misuse of government resources, neglect of duty for negligence during crisis, and neglect of duty for contempt of the Legislature.

It was a historic day, showing deep polarization gripping the community and CNMI politics in Torres' term, and disunited Republican representatives in the House.

The impeachment votes set the stage for a trial in the Senate, which will decide a few months before Torres faces re-election, whether to acquit the youngest governor on U.S. soil or convict and remove him from office.

With the House's action, the articles of impeachment will now go to the nine-member Senate, which is controlled by Republicans. Torres is the titular head of the Republican Party. The Senate will need a two-third vote—six votes—to convict and remove Torres.

In a statement yesterday, Torres said it is unfortunate to

witness the hatred and the willful spread of misinformation from the mouths of certain individuals as evidenced by the calls for his impeachment and the demonstration held outside of the Legislature.

"I have been advocating for all of us to work collaboratively as one united Commonwealth, and yet, politically-motivated members of the House of Representatives have chosen time and time against this," Torres said.

He said politically motivated representatives have chosen to pursue a witchhunt in order to perpetuate this motion that he is a corrupt leader who does not care for the wellbeing of his home and its people.

Reiterating his previous comments that he has done anything illegal, the governor said he has trust in the Senate's ability to conduct upcoming impeachment trial with transparency, in proper decorum, and in accordance with a set of published rules.

The public comment portion of the House session took one hour and 30 minutes as many Torres supporters and pro-impeachment advocates spoke. The session started at 10am and finished at 4:50pm.

Police officers stood inside and outside the Legislature building as Torres' supporters and pro-impeachment and Democrat officers and supporters gathered in separate tents in front of the Legislature building.

Torres' supporters, who outnumbered the pro-impeachment people, put up on their tent banners that read "Stop the bullying, Stop the hate, we are tired." Other banners read "We love Gov. Torres," "Respect My Vote, No Impeachment," "We fight for Governor Because He Fights For Us," and "Always Grateful, Never Hateful."

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com

it serve justice to the victim's family, and justice to the community, and the people of the Commonwealth," he stated.

COVID

From Page 1

late Tuesday, CHCC said the 33 new cases were identified through surveillance and travel testing on Jan. 9 and Jan. 10. Of that number, CHCC reported that one was identified on Jan. 9 and the remaining 32 were identified on Jan. 10.

By identification method, CHCC reported that 15 were found through contact tracing, 15 through community testing, and three through travel testing. The vaccination statuses of the 33 individuals were pending verification. The 33 have been isolated and are being actively monitored, said CHCC.

As of Jan. 11, there were 10 individuals hospitalized as a result of COVID-19: five are unvaccinated, five vaccinated, and one on a ventilator.

As of Jan. 10, there have been 2,987 recoveries, 403 active cases, and 17 COVID-19-related deaths of the cases identified since Oct. 28, 2021.

Tinian is 99.8% vaccinated

In related news, the Office of the Mayor of Tinian and Agui-guan posted on its Facebook page yesterday that the island has now the highest COVID-19 vaccination rate in the CNMI, with 99.8% of its eligible population being fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

The office posted a screenshot from the www.vaccinatecnmi.com dashboard that showed that 1,861 of Tinian's 1,865 eligible residents are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. "Kudos to all for taking the necessary steps to protect yourselves and others," said the office.

Guam logs 273rd death

In Guam, the Joint Informa-

A longer version of this story is available at www.saipantribune.com

tion Center confirmed the island's 273rd COVID-19-related death yesterday. The patient was a 90-year-old partially vaccinated male with underlying health conditions. He tested positive for COVID-19 last Dec. 27 and was pronounced dead in the U.S. Naval Hospital Guam on Jan. 5.

A statement from Guam Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero about the death was included in the JIC press release.

"A loved one's passing is a difficult time, and to his family and friends, [first gentleman] Jeff [Cook], [Lt. Gov.] Josh [Tenorio], and I extend our deepest condolences," said Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero in a JIC news release. "We honor his memory and all our victims of COVID-19 by forging forward in our response, using all the tools at our disposal to protect others from this deadly virus."

Guam also reported 422 new positive cases last Tuesday, with 126 cases identified through contact tracing, and 516 cases yesterday. That's 938 new cases in just two days.

CNMI vaccinations

For the latest update on the CNMI's vaccination efforts, CHCC reported that 209 COVID-19 shots were administered on Jan. 11, bringing the CNMI's vaccination rate to 97.2%. Registering for vaccinations can be done at www.vaccinatecnmi.com.

For the latest update on COVID-19 testing efforts, CHCC reported that 454 tests were conducted on Jan. 10. Registering for CBT can be done at <https://covidtesting.chcc.health>. While waiting on your COVID-19 test results, CHCC asks you to stay home as much as possible and limit your contact with others.

by either party," he said.

The JGO motion alleged Torres' counsel allegedly communicated with the deputy clerk of court of the CNMI Supreme Court on the afternoon of Dec. 29, 2021, seeking to arrange a meeting between Torres and the chief justice.

"The governor intended to influence the Supreme Court to appoint a different judge more to his liking," the lawyers claim.

The deputy clerk of court denied the request. Following that, on the morning of Dec. 30, 2021, counsel for Torres hand-delivered a letter to the Superior Court clerk of court that asserted that neither Bellas nor any other current or former CNMI judge should serve as judge pro tempore in this matter.

JGO

From Page 3

court's appointment of former Superior Court associate judge Timothy Bellas as the judge in his lawsuit.

"A request for a different judge to be appointed, like any other request for a court order, must be made by motion. ... The governor has filed no such motion," the lawyers said.

Superior Court clerk of court Patrick Diaz affirmed this with *Saipan Tribune*, stating that Torres has yet to file an official motion in opposition to Bellas' appointment.

"The parties need to file a formal motion to disqualify and the court will then set a hearing to hear the motion. So far, no motion has been filed



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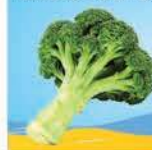
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CHCC now enables new parents to obtain SSN for newborns

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp., in collaboration with U.S. Social Security Administration, has successfully implemented what’s called Enumeration at Birth program, where new parents have the option to request a Social Security number for their newborns during the birth registration process.

“The EAB is a convenient service option for parents who need to apply for a new SSN for their child,” said Wilbert Rospel, the state vital statistics registrar. “It saves parents

time gathering the necessary proofs, completing the Social Security Card application, and visiting or mailing original documents to a Social Security field office for processing.”

According to Social Security, the evidence required to

process an SSN application for a newborn is the same evidence gathered by birthing facility employees and verified with the respective bureaus of vital statistics during the birth registration process. Through EAB, the CHCC Health and Vital Statistics Office’s Electronic Vital Registration Sys-

tem securely sends birth registration information to Social Security for processing and issuing new SSNs per request.

Currently, the national average processing time for EAB cases is two weeks. Parents may expect to wait up to an additional two weeks to receive a new SSN card.

For more information regarding EAB program, visit <https://faq.ssa.gov/en-us/Topic/article/KA-10041>.

For more information about CHCC programs, follow @cnmichcc on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter; visit www.chcc.gov.mp; or call (670) 234-8950. **(PR)**



COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY
MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
PO BOX 501055, SAIPAN MP 96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500/1 • FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
E-MAIL ADDRESS: CPA.ADMIN@PTICOM.COM WEBSITE: [HTTPS://WWW.CNMPORTS.COM](https://www.cnmports.com)



Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport
“Car Rental Concessions”
CPA-RFP-007-21
Request for Proposals
for: CPA Concession No. CRS-2021-01

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (“CPA” or “Authority”) is soliciting proposals for the award of one (1) concession granting the privilege to provide motor vehicle rental services to the traveling public (including the provision of insurance related to motor vehicles rented in the operation of such motor vehicle rental services) at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport (“Car Rental Concession”). The successful proposer will be expected to provide motor vehicle rental services in accordance with its concession and concession agreement at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport for a period of approximately two years (contract to end on 5/31/2024) upon entering into a concession agreement with the Authority.

The date of issuance of CPA-RFP-007-21 is **January 13, 2022**, and it can be obtained at the issuing office: CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950, Second floor of Arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport.

Proposals must be addressed to Commonwealth Ports Authority, Attn: Car Rental Concessions Evaluation Committee, CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950; and submitted to and received by the CPA Administration Office (second floor of arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport) **by or before 4:00 p.m. on February 23, 2022**, at which time the proposal period shall expire. Proposals must be accompanied with a non-refundable administrative fee of \$100.00 (certified cashier’s checks made out to Commonwealth Ports Authority) to defray the costs associated with handling and considering the proposal. Proposals are not required to include a prepaid minimum concession fee.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority reserves the right to cancel this RFP and to reject any and all proposals in accordance with its Concession Regulations (NMIAC Chapter 40-70).

CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO
Executive Director



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E-MAIL ADDRESS: CPA.ADMIN@PTICOM.COM WEBSITE: [HTTPS://WWW.CNMPORTS.COM](https://www.cnmports.com)



Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport
“Car Rental Concessions”
CPA-RFP-008-21
Request for Proposals
for: CPA Concession No. CRR-2021-01


The Commonwealth Ports Authority (“CPA” or “Authority”) is soliciting proposals for the award of one (1) concession granting the privilege to provide motor vehicle rental services to the traveling public (including the provision of insurance related to motor vehicles rented in the operation of such motor vehicle rental services) at the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport (“Car Rental Concession”). The successful proposer will be expected to provide motor vehicle rental services in accordance with its concession and concession agreement at the Benjamin Taisacan Manglona International Airport for a period of about two years (contract ends on 5/31/2024) upon entering into a concession agreement with the Authority.

The date of issuance of CPA-RFP-008-21 is **January 13, 2022**, and it can be obtained at the issuing office: CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950, Second floor of Arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport.


Proposals must be addressed to Commonwealth Ports Authority, Attn: Car Rental Concessions Evaluation Committee, CPA Administration Office, Saipan International Airport, P.O. Box 501055, Saipan, MP 96950; and submitted to and received by the CPA Administration Office (second floor of arrival terminal at the Saipan International Airport) **by or before 4:00 p.m. on February 23, 2022**, at which time the proposal period shall expire. Proposals must be accompanied with a non-refundable administrative fee of \$100.00 (certified cashier’s checks made out to Commonwealth Ports Authority) to defray the costs associated with handling and considering the proposal. Proposals are not required to include a prepaid minimum concession fee.

The Commonwealth Ports Authority reserves the right to cancel this RFP and to reject any and all proposals in accordance with its Concession Regulations (NMIAC Chapter 40-70).

CHRISTOPHER S. TENORIO
Executive Director



Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director



INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-22-009

PAU PAU BEACH 2-INCH WATERLINE EXTENSION PROJECT
ADDENDUM NO. 1
DATED: JANUARY 10, 2022

The Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is hereby notifying all prospective proposers of the following amendments to CUC-IFB-22-009:

The **Pre-bid Conference/Site Visit** has been rescheduled from 10:00am on January 13, 2022 to **10:00am on January 19, 2022**.

The **deadline for submission of questions or requests for clarification** has been extended from 10:00am on January 17, 2022 to **10:00am on January 21, 2022**.


Bid Submittal Deadline:

The deadline for submission of bids has been extended from 10:00am on February 2, 2022 to **10:00am on February 9, 2022**.


One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **“CUC-IFB-22-009, Pau Pau Beach 2-Inch Waterline Extension Project”**, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on February 9, 2022**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

All other terms and conditions in the Scope of Work, shall remain unchanged and in full force.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director



Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director



INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-22-013

Lower Base Sewer Phase 2 – Gravity Mains

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Lower Base Sewer Phase 2 – Gravity Mains in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The intent of the contract is for the Contractor to provide all labor, equipment, supplies and materials necessary to complete the scope of work which consists of the installation of sewer gravity mains, manholes, sewer laterals and connections to the new sewer system, connection to the existing sewer on Isa Drive, concrete encasement of new sewer mains, utility crossings, restoration of site pavement, temporary soil erosion control, temporary traffic control, and other related work. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the sewer and water system. CUC requires the Project to be completed in **365 calendar days** from date of award of contract.

The project is funded by a grant from the United States of Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of approval for project award from USEPA.

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of **\$200.00** (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by site visits will be held on **January 12, 2022 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) copies of the bid must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **“CUC-IFB-22-013, Lower Base Sewer Phase 2 – Gravity Mains”** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on February 1, 2022**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before due date and time. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement this form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of not less than fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier’s check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. A Payment Bond of one Hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers’ questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI’s Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI’s Insurance Code.*

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor’s preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 a.m. (ChST) on January 18, 2022** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Nicolette Villagomez, CUC Water/Wastewater Engineer via email address nicolette.villagomez@cucgov.org and to Christie Sablan, P&S, Senior Administrative Technician – christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator



Commonwealth Utilities Corporation



INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-22-015

SUPPLY AND DELIVERY OF HEAVY EQUIPMENT

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids for the supply and delivery of heavy equipment for its fleet in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

This project is funded from the United States Department of the Interior (US DOI), Office of the Insular Affairs (OIA).

Prospective Bidders must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of \$100.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **“CUC-IFB-22-015, Supply and Delivery of Heavy Equipment”** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 3, 2022** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before submission deadline. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

A Bid Guarantee of fifteen (15%) percent of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier’s check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers’ questions, concerns and qualification should be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI’s Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI’s Insurance Code.

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor’s preparation of a bid or supply under the contract. The IFB does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the bid under this request, or to procure or contract for goods. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on January 20, 2022**, to Manny B. Sablan, CUC’s Purchasing Administrator, via email manny.sablan@cucgov.org with copies to Yvonne C. Ogumoro, CUC’s Acting Water/Wastewater Division Manager via email at yvonne.ogumoro@cucgov.org and Christie L. Sablan, CUC’s Senior Administrative Technician at christie.sablan@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in the said bids, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids submitted shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

US Navy to drain Hawaii tank system blamed for tainted water

HONOLULU (AP)—After initially resisting, the U.S. Navy will comply with Hawaii's order to remove fuel from a massive underground storage tank facility near Pearl Harbor blamed for contaminating drinking water, officials said Tuesday.

The Navy is making preparations to defuel the facility, Rear Adm. Blake Converse said during a U.S. House Armed Services Subcommittee on Readiness hearing.

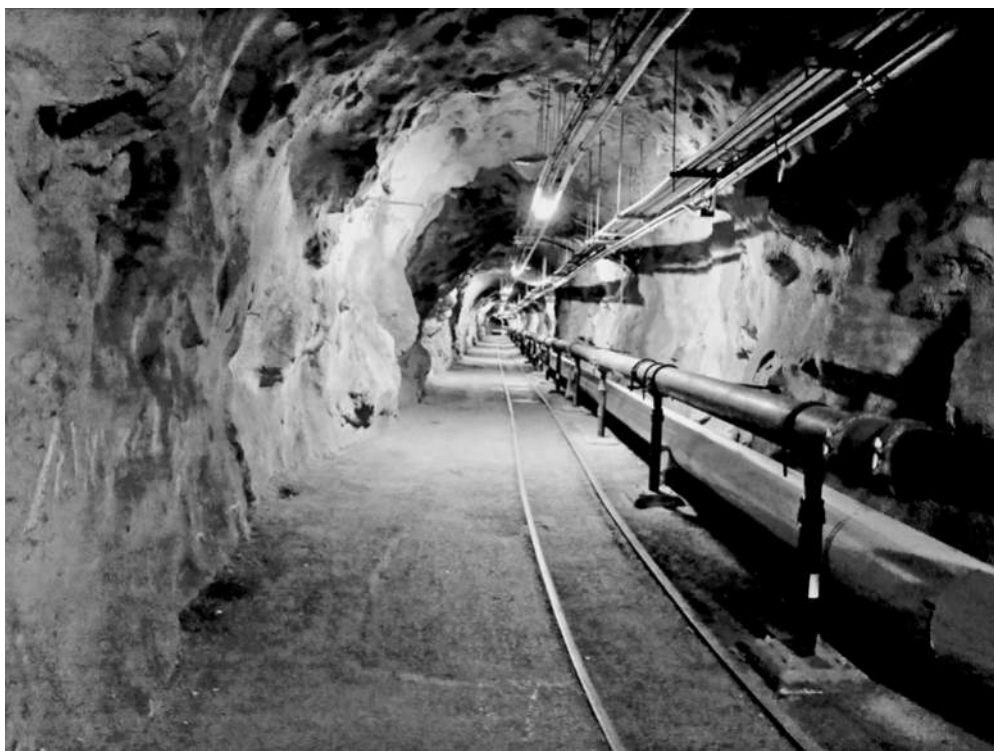
"The Navy caused this problem, we own it and we're gonna fix it," said Converse, deputy commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet.

Hawaii's governor said he expected the Navy to immediately comply with the state's order and address the threat the tank facility poses to the environment and the well-being of the state's military families and residents.

"I'm pleased to hear the Navy is doing the right thing," Gov. David Ige said in a statement.

The Navy's water system serves some 93,000 people in residential homes, offices, elementary schools and businesses in and around Pearl Harbor. Starting in late November, about 1,000 people complained that their tap water smelled like fuel or reported physical ailments such as nausea and rashes after ingesting it.

After petroleum was detected in a drinking well, Hawaii ordered the Navy to drain fuel from the tanks to protect Oahu's drinking water. Navy officials said Hawaii's order wasn't necessary because a



A tunnel inside the Red Hill Underground Fuel Storage Facility is seen in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on Jan. 26, 2018. AP

Nov. 20 spill they believed tainted the water occurred inside an access tunnel and they didn't believe the tanks themselves were to blame.

The Navy contested Hawaii's order, prompting a December hearing before a deputy state attorney general. The hearings officer concluded the tanks were a "ticking time bomb" and that the order

needed to be upheld.

The Red Hill facility holds 20 giant underground tanks built into the side of a mountain during World War II. Each tank is roughly the height of a 25-story building. Collectively, they can hold up to 250 million gallons (946 million liters) of fuel, though two of the tanks are now empty.

Converse said Tuesday that

Adm. Samuel Paparo, commander of U.S. Pacific Fleet, directed compliance with the order when the Hawaii Department of Health finalized it last week.

The Navy believes its water system became contaminated by jet fuel that leaked from pipes connected to the Red Hill tanks. It detected jet fuel in a well that draws on an

aquifer just 100 feet (30 meters) below the tank complex.

So far only the Navy's drinking water has been tainted. Petroleum hasn't shown up in the municipal water system operated by the Honolulu Board of Water Supply. But the utility draws water from the same aquifer as the Navy.

Hawaii officials are concerned that petroleum could migrate through the aquifer from the area of the Navy's well to the water utility's Halawa well and poison the city's drinking water. The Board of Water Supply has suspended use of its Halawa well, which supplies about one-quarter of the water consumed in urban Honolulu, to try to prevent petroleum from infecting its water system.

Wayne Tanaka, the director of the Sierra Club of Hawaii which has long fought to close the tanks, welcomed the Navy's decision to comply with the order.

"I'm hopeful they're finally seeing the light and acknowledging the facility is an inherent danger to our water sup-

ply," Tanaka said.

He said the state Department of Health, Hawaii's congressional delegation and others would need to ensure that the Navy meets the deadlines included in the department's order.

The Navy must submit an implementation and work plan by early February. After the Department of Health approves the plan, the Navy has 30 days to defuel the tanks.

"It is our full expectation that the Navy will follow the law by complying with the final order," said Katie Aritachang, a spokesperson for the Hawaii Department of Health.

Not operating the facility will have minimal impact, but continuing not to operate it beyond February will come at a cost, Converse said.

He said he didn't have details on costs and risks to national security of continued non-operation of the facility.

"Let me be clear, clean drinking water is national security," U.S. Rep. Kaiuli'i Kahele of Hawaii said at the hearing.



2022 CCA Board of Directors & GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING NOTICE

The Commonwealth Cancer Association is inviting the community, cancer survivors, friends, and supporters to its annual general membership meeting on Thursday, January 20, 2022 at 3:00PM via Zoom.

The agenda will include the president's 2021 annual report as well as the treasurer's financial report. Immediately after the presentations, election of three (3) board members will commence. Nominations for board members will be accepted in advance via email and/or during the virtual zoom meeting at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81145738608>

To submit board nomination, or for more information please contact CCA at 682- 0050 or email at ccamarianas@gmail.com

**PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT**

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB22-DPL-42200036
 SUBMISSION DATE: FEBRUARY 14, 2022 TIME: 9:00 A.M.

**"OFFICE SPACE RENTAL
FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LAND, SAIPAN"**

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (<https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/>) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT HORIGUCHI BLDG., GROUND FLOOR, 123 KOPPA DI ORU & BEACH ROAD, GARAPAN, SAIPAN DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ SIXTO K. IGISOMAR
 SECRETARY OF DPL

/S/ FRANCISCO C. AGUON
 DIRECTOR, P.S.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that Procurement Services has been relocated to **Horiguchi Building, Ground Floor, 123 Koppa Di Oru & Beach Road, Garapan Saipan, MP 96950.**

**Telephone number:
(670) 664-1500**

CUC: Power service outage on Saturday

There will be a scheduled power service interruption on Saturday, Jan. 15, 2022, from 5:30am to 6am and 2pm to 2:30pm, affecting Oleai and San Jose Beach Road (Trends Beauty Salon and Yuba Tire Shop). This will allow the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. to replace an existing 45-foot wooden power pole with a 55-foot concrete pole and to install conductors overhead primary lines.

No water well will be affected but the following wastewater facility will be affected: A7, W3 Lift Stations and two temporary bypass.

CUC continues to work diligently to minimize any inconvenience to its customers. For more information, contact the CUC Customer Hotline (236-4333) or monitor our Facebook page for the latest updates (<https://www.facebook.com/CommonwealthUtilitiesCorporation/>). (PR)

Opinion

Hafa Adair

Saipan Tribune

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Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950**Jayvee L. Vallejera** EDITOR
editor@saipantribune.com**Mark Rabago** ASSOCIATE EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

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EDITORIAL

Social media companies turned out to be prophets of the insurrection

In the weeks before the November 2020 election and subsequent Capitol insurrection, podcasts and Facebook postings lit up with allegations of massive voting fraud and calls for violence to address the spreading myth of a stolen presidential election. Social media companies, including Google and YouTube, allowed the use of their platforms to spread the myth and whip up pre-insurrection hysteria. And recent investigations indicate social media companies had the technology to intervene but didn't. Misinformation sites flourished, including one formed by a Missourian, United Conservatives for America, with more than 11,000 group members on Facebook.

Facebook waited until after the Jan. 6 attack to curtail that latter group's activities, which prompted founder Jerry Smith to complain to a *Washington Post*/ProPublica reporter: "Are you going to do away with their free speech? If someone thinks it's not a fair election... why can't they have their opinion on whether it's a fair election or not?"

Freedom of expression is a right that all Americans should exercise and defend. But all should be able to recognize the difference between responsible free expression and deliberate misinformation that incites violence. It's not always easy to draw a clear line, particularly when it involves internet communications. The kinds of violent discourse outlined in separate investigations by the Brookings Institution, ProPublica and *The Washington Post* underscore the need for tighter checks by social media companies on the radical groups using their services.

The "big lie" wasn't something President Donald Trump invented on the morning of Jan. 6, 2021, before he unleashed thousands of supporters to attack the Capitol. Rather, Trump's foot soldiers had spent previous weeks and months flooding the internet with wild, unsubstantiated assertions that Democrats were plotting to steal the election. Smith, for example, posted in August 2020 that "DEMS Are Pushing For Vote By Mail. Another Way For Them To Steal The Election." That was just one posting that prompted the unfiltered conspiracy-mongering by thousands of his other members. Facebook didn't intervene until it was too late.

Crazed rants on other group sites talked of lynchings, civil war and shooting traitors. They were so voluminous—10,000 per day—that Facebook either couldn't keep up or stopped trying. It did crack down completely on QAnon groups before the election. But then Facebook relaxed its focus, just as a new crop of radical groups was surging forward between November and Jan. 6, the ProPublica/*Post* investigation found.

A Brookings analysis of podcasts yielded similar findings, with a particularly sharp increase in the advancement of the big lie by prominent Trump backers like Steve Bannon, Sean Hannity and Rush Limbaugh, each of whom devoted half or more of their episodes to election-fraud conspiracy theories.

The insurrection might have come as a huge surprise to most Americans, but these investigations suggest it should've been no surprise at all, especially for their social media hosts.

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Let hospitals, not politicians, triage care during the latest COVID-19 surge

The omicron surge is pushing our nation's health care system to the brink. As omicron infections surge, the number of people seeking care in emergency rooms and hospitals is skyrocketing. Though omicron may prove to be less virulent than delta and other variants, the volume of infections is placing unprecedented demand on hospitals and their resources.

Some hospital systems are delaying elective surgeries to make room for COVID-19 patients. They are focusing on what is immediately urgent versus what is important and critical to avoid the need for emergency care.

Our nation is facing the most challenging period of the pandemic as medical facilities are forced to triage care. However, they alone should make such calls, rather than politicians. The New York governor used her legal authority to issue an executive order postponing elective surgeries. Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker was less legalistic, asking hospitals here to delay elective surgeries to save hospital beds and resources for COVID-19 patients.

Recall that 2020 was the deadliest year in our nation's history. However, one-quarter of the excess deaths were not directly due to COVID-19. This begs the ethical question: Will preventing some deaths that are avoidable with vaccination result in even more vaccinated people dying of other causes? When politicians advise hospitals on how to manage their patient care, even if the politicians have the legal right to do so, they are overstepping their reach.

The term "elective surgeries" is a misnomer. The word typically describes any surgery that can be scheduled in advance, rather than requiring immediate attention. This does not reduce the importance of these surgeries for the well-being of patients.

Some cancer surgeries are classified as elective since the person is not in immediate danger. However, any delays in such surgeries may place the patient at increased risk of metastases and poor outcomes. This includes some cases of early-stage breast cancer, in which surgical delays could move the disease to a higher stage, thereby increasing the risk of not catching it early enough to be cured and lowering the survival rate.

Hernia surgery, kidney stone removal and some heart surgeries also fall within the realm of elective surgeries. Such procedures are of great importance and are necessary to avoid future emergency procedures.

With the unvaccinated at least six times more likely to require hospitalization with COVID-19 than the vaccinated, hospital resources are being unnecessarily strained by the unvaccinated, particularly in areas with low vaccination rates.

Should people who choose to remain unvaccinated, and expose themselves to avoidable risks, be given higher priority over people who require care for other conditions that are classified as "nonemergency" but are still vitally important? Delays in such nonemergency care may lead to disease progression, transform-

By **SHELDON H. JACOBSON**

Chicago Tribune

Sheldon H. Jacobson is a professor of computer science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



ing their situation into one requiring emergency care, which is often riskier for the patient and more costly.

The strain on hospitals' resources is not only in hospital bed space but also in their work force. Omicron's contagiousness is making it difficult to keep health care facilities fully staffed. The recent change in Centers for Disease Control and Prevention policy reducing quarantine for asymptomatic cases to five days will help alleviate some such pressures. It may also increase the risk of transmission at such facilities if a physician or nurse remains contagious on their sixth day or beyond.

Over 35 million adults in the country remain unvaccinated, most by personal choice. If just 1 in 500 of them require hospital care over the next two months, then 70,000 such people represent the future demand that will be placed on the nation's health care system.

What is most baffling is that some hospitalized unvaccinated people deny that they have COVID-19. They may even defy the advice offered by the medical staff, asking for unproven treatments. If such people are unwilling to heed the advice of medical personnel and be vaccinated, this begs the question: Why do they come to them for assistance when their health has deteriorated due to COVID-19?

Sadly, some health care workers remain unvaccinated. Perhaps such people should staff new units to specifically treat COVID-19 patients, effectively relieving pressure on health care resources while simultaneously protecting those who are vaccinated and require care for non-COVID-19 conditions.

The best outcome from this health care resource crisis is that omicron is likely to leave as quickly as it arrived and restore the health care system's stability and availability. Hopefully, the delayed elective surgeries will result in minimal negative consequences. However, the risk of such outcomes is not zero.

The next month will be a time for many to hunker down by choice and work to remain infection-free. They should do it not only for themselves, but also to help our nation's health care system avoid making difficult decisions that could affect our friends or loved ones. When resources are strained, rationing care is inevitable. Under these extreme conditions, let the medical community make such decisions.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Mocking anti-vaxxers' deaths is ghoulish, yes—but necessary

Among all the ways that COVID-19 affects our lives, the pandemic confronts us with a profound moral dilemma:

How should we react to the deaths of the unvaccinated?

On the one hand, a hallmark of civilized thought is the sense that every life is precious.

On the other, those who have deliberately flouted sober medical advice by refusing a vaccine known to reduce the risk of serious disease from the virus, including the risk to others, and end up in the hospital or the grave can be viewed as receiving their just deserts.

That's even more true of those who not only refused the vaccine for themselves, but publicly advocated that others do so.

It has become common online and in social media for vaccine refusers and anti-vaccine advocates to become the target of ridicule after they come down with COVID-19 and especially if they die from it.

Witness the subreddit HermanCainAward, which Lili Loofbourow of Slate identified in September as "a site for heartless and unrepentant schadenfreude."

The site is named for the former Republican candidate for president who became one of the first political notables to succumb to the disease after publicly defying social distancing measures.

into that category—she asserted opposition not to the vaccines as such, but to vaccination mandates.

"I don't think the government should be involved in mandating what vaccines people are taking," she said during a livestreamed town hall on Nov. 3, 2019, during an unsuccessful campaign for the state assembly. "If the government is going to mandate vaccines, what else will they mandate?"

That town hall predated the pandemic; the mandate Ernby opposed then was a law tightening the immunization rules for California schoolchildren by eliminating exemptions based on "personal belief."

But Ernby made clear that her opposition extended to the COVID vaccines. In August, she posted a statement on her Facebook page supporting Huntington Beach firefighters who were opposing a vaccine mandate.

"The vaccine is not the cure to Covid, and mandates won't work," she wrote.

It should be clear that opposing vaccine mandates as a substitute for opposing vaccination itself is a fundamentally incoherent position. It's little more than the garden variety small-government Republican ideology. That's what it was in Ernby's hands.

"I want small government, I want lower taxes, I want to protect our freedoms," she said during her discussion of vaccine mandates at that town hall.

By **MICHAEL HILTZIK**
Los Angeles Times

Michael Hiltzik is a columnist for the Los Angeles Times.



public health system. Republicans like Ernby used COVID vaccines to turn public health into part of their partisan culture war.

The consequences are pernicious. They can be measured in overwhelmed emergency rooms and intensive care units, in hospital staffs burned out or rendered missing in action because they've been infected.

Ernby reportedly died at home, but others of her ilk took up hospital beds that may accordingly have been denied to others in great need of treatment for non-COVID conditions.

In Ernby's home county, Orange, health authorities say that ambulances are waiting longer to offload patients into emergency rooms and at least nine hospitals have set up surge tents to increase capacity, according to my colleagues Gregory Yee and Rong-Gong Lin II.

That brings us back to the tenor of the online reaction to the deaths of Ernby and her fellow anti-vaxxers. Some of those who object to the tone of the commentary are merely voicing a variation on the "civility" argument that was commonly raised against critics of the intemperate and inhumane policies of the Trump administration.

As I observed then, pleas for "civility" are a fraud. Their goal is to blunt and enfeeble criticism and distract from its truthfulness. Typically, they're the work of hypocrites.

Consider the objection raised against Ernby's critics by her friend Ben Chapman: He didn't merely decry the criticism, but attributed it to "the woke big-government mob," thereby exploiting her death to continue her partisan culture war against a sensible public health policy.

So what, then, is the proper response to the deaths of anti-vaxxers or other determined foes of public health? First, we must acknowledge that the enemies needing to be stamped out are the misinformation, lies and stupidity being injected into the fight against COVID.

Second, we must view every one of these deaths as a teachable moment. They demonstrate in the most vivid way imaginable the folly of vaccine refusal and of flouting responsible public health measures. They underscore the dire consequences of turning public health into a partisan football.

Kelly Ernby's friends and family ask us to remember her for her career as a public servant and as a devoted spouse and mother. But let's not mince words: Her campaigns against public health measures negated whatever good she may have done in her other endeavors.

The policies Ernby advocated may well have contributed to the spread of COVID and to the damaging of the public health infrastructure in her own community. Even before this pandemic, she spoke out for measures that would threaten California schoolchildren with exposure to deadly childhood diseases. There were no scientific or medical grounds for her opposition to mandates; there was only political ideology.

It may be not a little ghoulish to celebrate or exult in the deaths of vaccine opponents. And it may be proper to express sympathy and solicitude to those they leave behind.

But mockery is not necessarily the wrong reaction to those who publicly mocked anti-COVID measures and encouraged others to follow suit, before they perished of the disease the dangers of which they belittled.

Nor is it wrong to deny them our sympathy and solicitude, or to make sure it's known when their deaths are marked that they had stood fast against measures that might have protected themselves and others from the fate they succumbed to.

There may be no other way to make sure that the lessons of these teachable moments are heard.

Government mandates have been with us for untold decades. We require drivers to wear seat belts, cars to be equipped with air bags and drivers to observe speed limits and avoid pedestrians. We ban smoking in public places.

Like another site, sorryantivaxxer.com, the subreddit hosts snippets and photographs of anti-vaccine advocates, often taken at their deathbeds.

The issue of how to think about the deaths of unvaccinated has been thrown into high relief locally by the case of Kelly Ernby, a prominent Orange County Republican and deputy district attorney who advocated against vaccine mandates and died of COVID around New Year's Day, unvaccinated.

Ernby's death promptly came to symbolize the rift in the social fabric caused by the ravages of COVID.

Some online commenters greeted her demise with glee, provoking her political friends to push back against what Ben Chapman, a Costa Mesa GOP official, called "bigotry and hate" directed against her.

My colleague Nicholas Goldberg recently lamented eloquently the rift in the social fabric that this species of callous commentary represents. "Mocking anti-vaxxers when they get sick has become a bit of a sport," he wrote.

I have a slightly different take.

To begin with, let's stipulate that not all people unvaccinated against COVID are alike. Some have remained unvaccinated for legitimate medical reasons—they may be children for whom the COVID vaccines haven't yet been officially ruled safe, or people with genuine medical reasons for avoiding the vaccine.

Some may have legitimately faced obstacles in getting to a vaccination site and receiving the full series of shots before becoming exposed to the disease.

Others may have refused the vaccine because they've been deceived by the misinformation and disinformation spread by the anti-vaccine crowd such as anchors on Fox News.

The deaths of all those victims are truly lamentable.

Finally, there are those who have voiced public opposition to the vaccines—not all of whom are unvaccinated themselves. Some have couched their opposition in policy terms. Ernby fell

Contrary to Ernby's assertions, however, mandates do work. Requirements that people provide evidence of vaccination before attending public events or entering restaurants or bars have been associated with heightened vaccine rates abroad. Employer mandates in the U.S. have raised vaccination rates at workplaces, as United Airlines has shown.

As for whether a vaccination mandate is a slippery slope to more government control, as Ernby maintained, government mandates have been with us for untold decades. We require drivers to wear seat belts, cars to be equipped with air bags and drivers to observe speed limits and avoid pedestrians. We ban smoking in public places.

Vaccine mandates themselves have been part of the educational system for longer than anyone can remember in every state in the Union: California requires K-12 pupils to have as many as 20 doses of immunizations against polio, measles, mumps, rubella, whooping cough, diphtheria, hepatitis and chicken pox.






Obviously, the mandates exist because these diseases threaten not only infected persons themselves, but the community, meaning anyone they come in contact with. That's the folly of the anti-mandate argument: It places a perverse conception of individual "freedom" in opposition to the communal interest.

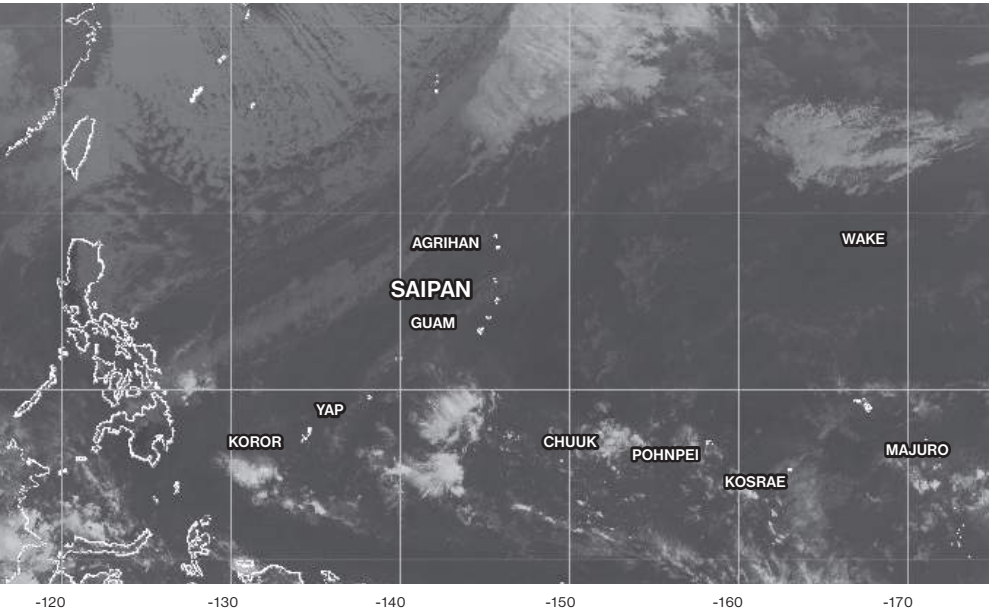
As it applies to COVID, the argument undermines communal action at precisely the moment when communal action has emerged as the only obstacle to the spread of a deadly disease.

By the way, no one has ever claimed that the COVID vaccines are a "cure"—another smidgen of misinformation Ernby purveyed. The COVID vaccines, however, have been spectacularly effective in reducing the severity of the infection, a result that appears to hold true for the extremely transmissible omicron variant.

What's especially iniquitous about the anti-mandate and anti-vaccination arguments is the damage they are doing to America's

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN									
TODAY		FRIDAY		SATURDAY		SUNDAY		MONDAY	
									
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 5 to 10 mph.		Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 5 to 10 mph becoming northeast 10 to 15 mph Friday.		Mostly cloudy with scattered showers.		Partly sunny with scattered showers.		Mostly cloudy. Isolated showers.	
86°	76°	76°	86°	85°	76°	87°	76°	76°	85°



PICTURE TIME: 8:03 AM, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12, 2022

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite shows clear skies across Guam and east of the CNMI. A weak, westward drifting trade-wind trough is triggering some early morning showers across Saipan and Tinian. Combined seas are around 4 to 5 feet, composed of background trade-wind swell and lingering, long-period north swell.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

- Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.
- Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html>
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
 - Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
 - Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

onds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mp and, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at <http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html> and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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MICRONESIA			▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Mostly Sunny	84 / 75 °F	
Palau	AM Thunderstorms	85 / 77 °F	
Yap	Thunderstorms	84 / 78 °F	
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	85 / 80 °F	
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	86 / 78 °F	
Kosrae	Partly Cloudy	86 / 80 °F	
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	85 / 80 °F	

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	06:46 AM	18:04 PM
Friday	06:46 AM	18:05 PM
Saturday	06:46 AM	18:05 PM
Sunday	06:46 AM	18:06 PM
Monday	06:46 AM	18:07 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	02:39 PM	14:17 PM
Friday	-	03:29 PM	15:00 PM
Saturday	-	04:21 PM	15:46 PM
Sunday	-	05:12 AM	16:35 PM
Monday	-	06:04 PM	17:27 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE			▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy/Wind	76 / 62 °F	
Beijing	Sunny	39 / 16 °F	
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	64 / 60°F	
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	67° / 59°F	
London	Mostly Sunny	44 / 31 °F	
Los Angeles	Cloudy	71 / 52 °F	
Manila	Partly Cloudy	85 / 72°F	
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	91/ 69 °F	
Miami	AM Showers	74 / 58 °F	
New York	Partly Cloudy	41 / 29°F	
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	46 / 34°F	
Paris	AM Fog/PM Sun	38 / 29 °F	
Busan	Sunny/Wind	40 / 24 °F	
Rome	Sunny	53 / 31 °F	
Salem	Partly Cloudy	59 / 34 °F	
San Francisco	Mostly Cloudy	58 / 45 °F	
Seoul	Sunny	27 / 10 °F	
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	51 / 34 °F	
Washington, DC	Partly Coudy	50 / 34 °F	

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY			FEET
06:12 AM	High Tide	1.30	
10:32 AM	Low Tide	1.05	
3:47 PM	High Tide	1.53	
11:36 PM	Low Tide	-0.17	

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF NOVEMBER 12, 2021

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA117	7:20am	8:05am	2, 4, 6	UA116	5:30am	6:16am	2, 4, 6
UA117	9:50am	10:35am	1, 3, 5, 7	UA174	8:00am	8:46am	1, 3, 5, 7
GUAM-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-GUAM			
UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	Daily	UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	2, 5
				UA184	10:55pm	4:45am+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7
SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)				MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN			
UA117/183	7:20am	9:50pm	2, 4, 6 via Guam	UA184/174	10:40pm	6:16am+1	5 via Guam
UA117/183	9:50am	9:50pm	1, 3, 5, 7 via Guam	UA184/174	10:40pm	8:46am+1	2 via Guam
				UA184/174	10:55pm	6:16am+1	1, 3 via Guam
				UA184/174	10:55pm	8:46am+1	4, 6, 7 via Guam
SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)				INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN			
7C3406	3:10PM	6:55PM	6	7C3405	8:30AM	2:10PM	6
TW9308	3:20PM	8:00PM	4, 5	OZ6233	9:00AM	2:30PM	6
OZ6243	4:00PM	7:40PM	6	TW9307	10:00AM	2:20PM	4, 5

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF MAY 18, 2021

SAIPAN TO ROTA				ROTA TO SAIPAN			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Daily	3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Daily
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Daily	3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Daily
1303	1:30PM	2:00PM	Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri Daily	3103	1:30PM	3:00PM	Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri Daily
1304	3:30PM	4:00PM		3104	4:30PM	5:00PM	
ROTA TO GUAM				GUAM TO ROTA			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable	4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable
SAIPAN TO TINIAN				TINIAN TO SAIPAN			
FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY	FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable	2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily	2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily	2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
				2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
				2105	11:30	11:45	Daily
				2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
				2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
				2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
				2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
				2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
				2111	17:30	17:45	Daily
				2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

Business

Bank of America slashes fees for account overdrafts

NEW YORK (AP)—Bank of America slashed the amount it charges customers when they spend more than they have in their accounts and plans to eliminate entirely its fees for bounced checks.

It's the latest move by the nation's biggest banks to roll back the overdraft fees they long charged customers, fees that often amount to hundreds of dollars a year for frequent overdraft users.

The bank based in Charlotte, North Carolina, will cut

the overdraft fees it charges customers to \$10 from \$35 starting in May. It will also stop charging fees for non-sufficient funds—which are levied when it rejects a transaction—better known as bouncing a check.

While checks are no longer widely used, NSF fees can come from automated payments like utility bills. Bank of America, the nation's second-largest bank, says roughly 25% of its overdraft/NSF fee revenue each year came from

NSF fees. Overdraft fees typically come when someone makes a purchase on a debit card that exceeds the available cash in their account.

Altogether, Bank of America estimates the steps will cut its overdraft-fee revenues by 97% from where they were in 2009, the year before it started taking incremental steps toward reining in overdraft-fee revenues.

"This is the final step in the journey we've been on," said Holly O'Neill, president

of retail banking at BofA, in an interview. "We have good financial solutions for clients without them having to rely on overdraft, but we will still have overdraft if it is needed."

Consumer groups and politicians applauded the measure, particularly with Bank of America's size as the largest consumer banking franchise in the country.

"I've been working to reduce or eliminate overdraft fees for 20 years and to give them credit, they really did listen,"

said Martin Eakes, CEO of the Center for Responsible Lending. "This could potentially hundreds of millions of dollars staying in customers' accounts instead of going toward fees."

It remains to be seen whether the decision by BofA—a leader in the retail banking industry—to cut overdraft fees will pressure other banks to take similar measures.

"Banks are going to take different approaches. Some are going to eliminate them, reduce them, others will remain in denial about how damaging these fees are. But now they have competitive pressure," said Lauren Saunders, associate director for the National Consumer Law Center. "Any bank that is not seriously considering reforming their overdraft practices is just hurting themselves in the long term."

The bank is also eliminating two smaller fees as well. It will no longer allow customers to overdraft their accounts at the ATM and will eliminate a \$12 fee it charged customers when the bank automatically moved money from one account to another to avoid an overdraft, often moving money from a long-term savings account into the customers' primary checking.

Overdraft has its origins in banks providing a service for a fee to customers who may have not balanced their checkbook correctly and wanted a bank to honor a purchase. But the widespread use of debit cards changed this courtesy into a routine source of revenue for banks. If a customer lacked funds in their account, a \$5 coffee could end up costing \$35 because of overdraft fees.

Overdraft fees became lucrative for the industry but at the same time made banks a target for consumer advocates and regulators. After the financial crisis, Democrats put the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and other regulators in charge of reining in overdraft fee revenue. The CFPB under President Biden has decided to take another look at overdraft fee practices.

"For many big banks, overdraft fees are still the steady, reliable, predictable, easy revenue that shareholders love," said Rohit Chopra, the CFPB's director, in December.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Massachusetts and a long-time critic of banking practices like overdraft fees, called BofA's announcement "a step in the right direction" on Twitter.

Boeing airliner sales jump but deliveries lag rival Airbus

Boeing finished 2021 far behind European rival Airbus in deliveries of new aircraft, but sales bounced back after two dismal years caused by the 737 Max crashes and the pandemic.

Boeing said Tuesday that it delivered 38 commercial planes in December and 340 for all of 2021, nearly double the total for 2020.

However, Airbus reported Monday that it made 611 deliveries in 2021, topping Boeing for a third straight year. Boeing was hindered by production flaws that prevented shipments of its 787 Dreamliner for most of 2021.

Deliveries are bigger than bragging rights—they are an important source of cash for the companies because airlines typically pay a large portion of the purchase price when they take possession of a new plane.

Boeing also said that orders jumped to their highest level since 2018, before the grounding of the 737 Max and the pandemic caused sales to plummet for two years.

The Chicago company reported landing orders for 80 planes in December and 909 for the full year. After subtracting cancellations, however, Boeing posted 479 net orders,



A line of Boeing 777X jets are parked nose to tail on an unused runway at Paine Field, near Boeing's massive production facility, Friday, April 23, 2021, in Everett, Wash. AP

slightly behind the Airbus total of 507.

Boeing reported another 2021 figure of 535 orders by including 56 sales that it once considered unlikely to be completed but now views with more certainty. However, a spokesman said some of those orders were placed in earlier years. Because Boeing and Airbus backlogs are so big, airlines usually have to wait several years to get all the planes they order.

There is no question that the competition between the world's two big aircraft manufacturers has heated up after being lopsided in Airbus' favor for a time.

Boeing scored a coup last week when it landed a big order from Allegiant Air, which currently has an all-Airbus fleet. Last month, it was Airbus raiding Boeing customers by winning commitments for new orders from Air France-KLM and Australia's Qantas.

The accelerating pace of orders at both companies indicates that airlines are confident of strong demand and believe that the pandemic will subside—or travelers will decide to live with the risk of COVID-19 and resume flying anyway.

Neither Boeing nor Airbus gave any insight into how current orders and deliveries will affect their bottom lines.

Boeing will report 2021 financial results on Jan. 26. **(AP)**

Medicare limits coverage of \$28,000-a-year Alzheimer's drug

WASHINGTON (AP)—Medicare said Tuesday it will limit coverage of a \$28,000-a-year Alzheimer's drug whose benefits have been widely questioned, a major development in the nation's tug-of-war over the fair value of new medicines that offer tantalizing possibilities but come with prohibitive prices.

The initial determination from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services means that for Medicare to pay, patients taking Biogen's Aduhelm medication will have to be part of clinical trials to assess the drug's effective-

ness in slowing the progression of early-stage dementia as well as its safety. Medicare's national coverage determination would become final by April 11, following a public comment period and further evaluation by the agency.

"Alzheimer's disease is a devastating illness that has touched the lives of millions of American families," Medicare administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure said in a statement. "CMS has been and remains committed to providing the American public with a clear, trusted, evidence-based decision that is made only

after a thorough analysis of public feedback on the benefits and risks of coverage for Medicare patients."

The requirement for clinical studies applies to the entire class of drugs of which Aduhelm is a pioneer, monoclonal antibodies that work against amyloid, a kind of protein that forms plaques characteristic of Alzheimer's disease.

Biogen sharply disapproved of Medicare's decision. The company said in a statement that the decision "denies the daily burden of people living with Alzheimer's disease." Randomized clinical trials

"will exclude almost all patients who may benefit." The company said clinical trials can take months to years to set up and "hundreds of Alzheimer's patients...are progressing each day from mild to moderate disease stages, where treatment may no longer be an option."

The Alzheimer's Association called it "shocking discrimination against everyone with Alzheimer's disease," but Vermont Independent Sen. Bernie Sanders applauded the decision as "an important step forward" in efforts to curb "outrageous" drug prices.

Judge says FTC's antitrust case against Facebook can proceed

A federal judge has ruled that the Federal Trade Commission's revised antitrust suit against Meta, formerly known as Facebook, can proceed, shutting down the social media company's request for a dismissal.

In a revised complaint filed last August, the FTC argues that the company pursued a "buy or bury" strategy against rivals to suppress competition.

This is the FTC's second antitrust run at the company. A federal judge in June dismissed antitrust lawsuits brought against Facebook by the agency and a broad coalition of state attorneys general that were among multiplying efforts by federal and state regulators to rein in tech titans' market power.

The FTC is seeking remedies that could include a forced spinoff of Facebook's popular Instagram and WhatsApp messaging services, or a restructuring of the company.

U.S. District Judge James Boasberg, who in June ruled that the FTC's original lawsuit was "legally insufficient"

and didn't provide enough evidence to prove that Facebook was a monopoly, said in Tuesday's ruling that the the first complaint "stumbled out of the starting blocks."

But he added that, though the "core theory" of the lawsuit—that Facebook is a monopoly engaging in anticompetitive behavior—remains unchanged, the facts alleged this time around are "far more robust and detailed than before."

Meta said in an emailed statement it is "confident the evidence will reveal the fundamental weakness of the claims."

"Our investments in Instagram and WhatsApp transformed them into what they are today," the company said. "They have been good for competition, and good for the people and businesses that choose to use our products."

Holly Vedova, director of the FTC's bureau of competition, said the agency presented a "strong amended complaint, and we look forward to trial." **(AP)**

Nation

Biden challenges Senate on voting: 'Tired of being quiet!'

ATLANTA (AP)—Pounding his hand for emphasis, President Joe Biden challenged senators Tuesday to “stand against voter suppression” by changing Senate rules to pass voting rights legislation that Republicans are blocking from debate and votes.

Biden told a crowd in Atlanta gathered on the grounds of Morehouse College and Clark Atlanta University that he'd been having quiet conversations with senators for months over the two bills—a lack of progress that has brought him criticism from activists in his

own party.

“I’m tired of being quiet!” he shouted to cheers from the crowd.

In his remarks, Biden invoked the civil rights battles of the 1960s. He likened the wrongs of the past to modern-day efforts to subvert elections through the Capitol riot a year ago and a series of GOP-backed laws passed after former President Donald Trump lost in 2020 and then falsely claimed widespread voter fraud. Biden chastised Republicans for falling in line behind Trump’s election lies.

“Today, we call on Congress to get done what history will judge,” Biden said. “Pass the freedom to vote act.”

Biden’s speech was forceful, blunt and explicit, referring to new efforts to limit voting access as “Jim Crow 2.0.” For the first time, he directly advocated eliminating the Senate’s vote-blocking device called the filibuster in order to debate and vote on election and voting rights legislation. Though his focus brings more national attention to the debate ahead, it’s not clear what impact his newfound fire will have.

Current rules require 60 votes to advance most legislation—a threshold that Senate Democrats can’t meet alone because they have just a 50-50 majority with Vice President Kamala Harris to break ties. Republicans unanimously oppose the voting rights measures.

There also aren’t enough Democratic votes to change the Senate rule. West Virginia Sen. Joe Manchin threw more cold water on the idea Tuesday, saying he believes any changes should be made with substantial Republican buy-in. And there aren’t any Republi-

can senators willing to sign on.

“Not a single Republican has displayed the courage to stand up to a defeated president to protect Americans’ right to vote,” Biden said. “Not one. Not one.”

Congressional Democrats have written voting legislation that would usher in the biggest overhaul of U.S. elections in a generation by striking down hurdles to voting enacted in the name of election security. The legislation also would reduce the influence of big money in politics and limit partisan influence over the drawing of congressional districts.

The package would create national election standards that would trump state-level GOP laws. It would also restore the ability of the Justice Department to police election laws in states with a history of

discrimination.

Republicans say the changes are not aimed at fairness but at giving Democrats an advantage in elections.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky accused Biden of invoking “the brutal racial hatred of Jim Crow Segregation to smear states” new voting laws.

And it is coming from “a sitting president of the United States who pledged to lower the temperature and unite America,” McConnell said.

Even if Democrats clear the obstacles to passing the legislation, it could be too late to counter voting restrictions passed in 19 states following Trump’s 2020 loss and his lies—embraced by many in the GOP—that the election was stolen through voter fraud.

Medical helicopter crashes near church; all 4 aboard survive



AP
A medical helicopter rests next to the Drexel Hill United Methodist Church after it crashed in the Drexel Hill section of Upper Darby, Pa., on Tuesday, Jan. 11, 2022.

UPPER DARBY, Pa. (AP)—A pilot crash-landed a medical helicopter Tuesday without loss of life in a residential area of suburban Philadelphia, somehow avoiding a web of power lines and buildings as the aircraft fluttered, hit the street and slid into bushes outside a church, authorities and witnesses said.

It was a “miracle” that none of the four people aboard, including an infant patient, suffered life-threatening injuries, Upper Darby Police Superin-

tendent Timothy M. Bernhardt said.

Rescue crews rushed to the wreckage by the Drexel Hill United Methodist Church in Upper Darby at about 1 p.m. and helped get the pilot, two crew members and the infant out of the aircraft, Bernhardt said at a press conference.

The infant was taken to a hospital as authorities worked to notify the child’s family, Bernhardt said.

The aircraft had taken off from out of state. It’s believed

to have encountered mechanical problems during the flight, said a Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency spokesperson, citing reports from county officials.

At the crash site, a stop sign on the corner was cleaved into two and had apparently been hit by the helicopter when it came down. The aircraft was on its side in two pieces, just outside the stone church.

“It’s a miracle, it’s an absolute miracle, here what you see behind me,” Bernhardt

said, adding that he’s eager to shake the pilot’s hand for getting the helicopter down the way they did.

A witness, Joshua James, said he was driving nearby with his wife and young son when he saw the tail of the helicopter swaying back and forth as it slid to a stop. He put his car in reverse.

“It makes no sense to me that it didn’t hit any of the wires or anything—that it didn’t hit us,” James said.

Jerrell Saunders, 28, said he had been walking from his work in maintenance at an apartment building nearby when he saw the helicopter “just floating, like real low, like extremely low, like it could land on the building that I work at.”

He got in his car to go to the hardware store and the helicopter was going in the same direction. He said he saw it hit the ground in the middle of the road and slide across the ground until it crashed.

Christmas tree behind fire that killed 12, officials confirm

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—A Christmas tree fire caused the blaze that killed 12 relatives in a Philadelphia rowhome duplex, investigators confirmed Tuesday as they identified victims and announced preliminary findings, but stopped short of officially saying a 5-year-old boy playing with a lighter was behind it.

Fire Commissioner Adam Thiel hesitated to point blame at a news conference Tuesday but said the boy was the only person on that floor. The boy, who survived the fire, told several people he was playing with the lighter when the tree caught fire, according to a search war-

rant issued last week.

“Investigators believe that lighter was the reason the tree ignited,” Thiel said. “We are left with the words of that 5-year-old child, that traumatized 5-year-old child, to help us understand how the lighter and the tree came together with tragic consequences.”

None of six smoke alarms inside the two-story unit were working, Thiel said, and most had been apparently been removed since an inspection the city housing authority said it conducted last year. One alarm in a shared basement did work but activated late, he said.

As many as 18 people lived or stayed in the unit at various times, officials said previously.

The 12 people who died were all on the third floor, Thiel said Tuesday. One was found alive but died at the scene.

Firefighters arrived within minutes at the duplex near the Philadelphia Museum of Art, but it was already too late, Thiel said. The only other survivor was a man who jumped out of a third-floor window.

“There was zero visibility,” said Thiel, noting that temperatures reached nearly 1,000 degrees at the ceiling. “Toxic smoke filling the entire build-

ing. And it’s loud in a fire.

“Rest assured, those firefighters did their level best, as our medics did their best to save those lives,” he said. “Sometimes we are too late.”

The three-story brick duplex was owned by the Philadelphia Housing Authority, which is the city’s public housing agency and the state’s biggest landlord.

Housing officials said last week that the building, which had a separate lower unit, had 13 tamper-resistant, 10-year detectors, all of which were operational during the last inspection in May 2021.

ACROSS THE NATION

New trial set for man charged with killing 18 in Dallas area

DALLAS (AP) — A man charged with killing 18 older women in the Dallas area over a two-year span is set to be retried in April after the first jury to hear a murder case against him deadlocked. The retrial of Billy Chemirmir, 49, in the death of 81-year-old Lu Thi Harris is scheduled to begin on April 25, according to court records. His capital murder trial in Harris’ killing ended in a mistrial in November after jurors said they were deadlocked 11-1. It was not clear what verdict the majority of jurors supported. Following the mistrial, Dallas County District Attorney John Creuzot said he was committed to retrying the case and bringing another one against Chemirmir. Defense attorney Kobby Warren said after the trial that Chemirmir maintains his innocence, and that the case against him “was all circumstantial.”

Report: Plane hit power lines before crash that killed 4

EL CAJON, Calif. (AP) — A medical transport plane struck power lines in cloudy weather before it crashed last month near San Diego, killing two flight nurses and two pilots, federal investigators said Tuesday. The Learjet 35A crashed on Dec. 27 while preparing to land at Gillespie Field in El Cajon, according to a preliminary report from the National Transportation Safety Board.

The weather was overcast with clouds and mist when the plane struck power lines and then crashed into the yard of a home in the unincorporated San Diego County area about 1.5 miles (2.4 kilometers) east of the runway, the report said. The report didn’t indicate the exact cause of the accident, which will await the final report. Nobody on the ground was hurt.

Some schools close as extreme cold grips US Northeast

A mass of arctic air swept into the Northeast on Tuesday, bringing bone-chilling sub-zero temperatures and closing schools across the region for the second time in less than a week. High temperatures were not expected to make it out of the teens and 20s in most spots, with single digits in many areas, especially northern New England, according to the National Weather Service. But things felt even worse because of the wind, which made it feel below zero for many. Schools in Massachusetts’ three largest cities—Boston, Worcester and Springfield—canceled classes, saying they did not want children standing outside for extended periods of time waiting for buses. “There has been an increase of covid with transportation personnel, which would result in buses running up to 30 minutes late,” according to a tweet from the Worcester public schools. “The safety of our students and staff are always the focus of our decisions.” (AP)

Asia

6 missing in SKorea after construction site collapse

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—South Korean emergency officials on Tuesday said that at least six people were missing and dozens of nearby households forced to evacuate following the partial collapse of a high-rise apartment building that was under construction in the city of Gwangju.

Jo Ho-ik, a Gwangju fire department official, said rescue workers temporarily stopped searching in the evening for the missing people—believed to be all construction workers on the site—because of concerns that the structure could crumble further. He said workers could possibly resume searching on Wednesday depending on the outcome of a safety inspection.

Emergency workers rescued three laborers, including two who had been trapped in a shipping container pounded by rubble, after the exterior wall of the 39-floor structure partially collapsed Tuesday afternoon. One of the workers who were rescued was treated for minor injuries, Jo said.

The collapse destroyed at least 10 vehicles that were parked below and forced



The exterior wall of an apartment under construction is seen collapsed at a site in Gwangju, South Korea, Tuesday, Jan. 11, 2022.

emergency officials to evacuate 109 families and around 90 shops in nearby buildings. Officials were investigating the cause of the collapse.

Officials said 394 workers had been employed at the construction site, including the six who remain out of contact following the accident.

\$308M US aid for Afghanistan

WASHINGTON (AP)—The United States on Tuesday announced \$308 million in additional humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan, offering new aid to the country as it edges toward a humanitarian crisis since the Taliban takeover nearly five months ago.

White House national security council spokesperson Emily Horne said in a statement that the new aid from the U.S. Agency for International Development will flow through independent humanitarian organizations and will be used to provide shelter, health care,

winterization assistance, emergency food aid, water, sanitation and hygiene services.

The country's long-troubled economy has been in a tailspin since the Taliban takeover. Nearly 80% of Afghanistan's previous government's budget came from the international community. That money, now cut off, financed hospitals, schools, factories and government ministries. Desperation for such basic necessities has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as health care shortages, drought

and malnutrition.

The International Rescue Committee, a global humanitarian aid organization, said community health workers it supports have reported seeing a sharp increase in the number of children with severe acute malnutrition in Khost and Herat provinces. The group also reported that food prices in Afghanistan have risen by an estimated 10% to 20% compared with the previous five years.

The IRC's president and CEO, David Milliband, said the "cause of today's humanitarian disaster is clear: the economic tourniquet applied to Afghanistan."

NKorea claims successful test of hypersonic missile

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korea says leader Kim Jong Un oversaw a successful flight test of a hypersonic missile he claimed would remarkably increase the country's nuclear "war deterrent."

The report by North Korean state media on Wednesday came a day after the militaries of the United States, South Korea and Japan said they detected North Korea firing a suspected ballistic missile into its eastern sea.

The Korean Central News Agency said Tuesday's launch involved a hypersonic glide

vehicle, which after its release from the rocket booster demonstrated "glide jump flight" and "corkscrew maneuvering" before hitting a sea target 1,000 kilometers (621 miles) away. Photos released by the agency showed a missile mounted with a pointed cone-shaped payload soaring into the sky while leaving a trail of orange flames and Kim watching from a small cabin with top officials, including his sister Kim Yo Jong.

The launch was North Korea's second test of its purported hypersonic missile in

a week, a type of weaponry it first tested in September, as Kim Jong Un continues a defiant push to expand his nuclear weapons capabilities in the face of international sanctions, pandemic-related difficulties and deadlocked diplomacy with the United States.

The North has been ramping up its testing activity since last fall in what experts see as an attempt to apply more pressure on rivals Washington and Seoul to accept it as a nuclear power in hopes of winning relief from economic sanctions.

World

POLAND HITS SAD MILESTONE

100K deaths from COVID-19

WARSAW, Poland (AP)—Poland on Tuesday became the latest European nation to record 100,000 deaths related to coronavirus, a sad milestone that comes as the country braces for a surge of infections fueled by the omicron variant.

Nearly a quarter of those deaths—some 24,000—occurred in the most recent wave of infection that began in October, a period in which vaccines have been widely available in the European Union nation of 38 million people.

Health Minister Adam Niedzielski said Tuesday that 493 more people with COVID-19 had died, pushing the overall pandemic death toll to 100,254 in the central European nation.

The bleak marker comes as daily new infections have fallen following a peak in what officials call the country's "fourth wave" of COVID-19 driven by the delta variant. But with the omicron variant spreading, another large infection wave is looming.

The first two deaths from omicron were reported Monday, both in elderly and unvaccinated people.

Niedzielski said over



People light candles in Warsaw, Poland, Tuesday Jan. 11, 2022, to commemorate those who have died from COVID-19.

18,000 COVID-19 patients are hospitalized, making this "the most difficult situation compared to other waves."

Poland has struggled through the pandemic with a health care sector strapped by limited funding and the emigration of many medical professionals to Western Europe in the past two decades.

According to OECD statistics, Poland is the EU nation with the lowest number of working doctors in proportion to its population—just 2.4 to 1,000 inhabitants compared with 4.5 in Germany. Poland also has only 5 nurses to 1,000 inhabitants, below the EU average of 8 and far below richer countries like Germany, which has 14.

The vast majority of COVID-19 deaths in the last wave—83%—are of unvaccinated people. Among people under 44, more than 90% of those who died were not vaccinated.

The vaccination rate in Poland is nearly 56%—much lower than countries in Western Europe but much higher than some other central European countries like Bulgaria and Romania.

Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki's government has sought to encourage vaccinations but is also up against fears and hesitancy among some in the population—and sometimes among the governing Law and Justice party's own supporters.

Landslides from rain kill 12 in Brazil

BRASILIA, Brazil (AP)—Landslides have killed at least 12 people since the weekend in Brazil's Minas Gerais state, which has been pummeled by intense rainfall, and authorities are monitoring dams that could burst. Firefighters in the southeastern state found five people from the same family, two of them children, buried on a hillside near the state capital, Belo Horizonte.

Two hours away by car, in the city Sao Gonçalo do Rio Abaixo, a 10-year-old girl was also killed when a wall collapsed on her bedroom as she was sleeping, according to a statement from the state's civil defense authority on Tuesday.

Another three deaths occurred in the city of Caratinga, and in the city of Ervalia, a 20-year-old died when a landslide collapsed a bar, the bulletin said.

The state had reported two other deaths on Sunday.

It said 145 municipalities were in a state of emergency due to flooding that has already forced more

than 17,000 people to leave their homes.

Other states also have been hit by deadly rains in recent months. The state of Bahia reported 26 rain-caused deaths in November and December, and more than 100,000 have been evacuated in various states during the rainy season.

Parts of Minas Gerais have accumulated more than 400 millimeters (16 inches) of rain in the first 10 days of the year, according to Brazil's Meteorology Institute. That's still short of the 950 millimeters of rain recorded in the full January 2020 -- the most ever recorded for the month.

The institute forecast that rainfall in the state would only let up after Thursday.

In addition to collapsing hillsides that have claimed lives and closed roads, state authorities said they were concerned about the risk dams could give way. They were monitoring 42 dams in the state, three of which were considered at high risk, according to a document pub-

lished Tuesday by the National Mining Agency.

Authorities expressed concern that water was overflowing the retaining wall of the Carioca hydroelectric dam, below which riverside residents had evacuated their homes, including in the town Para de Minas.

In a post on social media, the town's mayor said firefighters used a helicopter to rescue 130 people stranded by the swollen river.

Minas Gerais was the site of two recent tragedies resulting from dam ruptures. In 2019, more than 200 people died when a dam in Brumadinho gave way and in 2015, the collapse of another dam killed 19 people.

The flood death total did not include the people who died when a towering rock slab detached from a canyon wall in the state's southern region, landing on boats, killing 10.

Authorities have said that rainfall may have contributed to the rock's collapse, but are still investigating the causes.

Environment

Approximately 1,500 new trees will help to combat erosion and contribute to a healthier watershed from the Ugum River in Inalåhan following a tree-planting event last month. Volunteers assisted the effort, led by the Guam Restoration of Watersheds initiative from the University of Guam Sea Grant program.

Without trees, loose sediment flows downstream through watersheds, resulting in the destruction of vegetation, depletion of land mass, an accumulation of sediment in nearby rivers and reefs, and loss of wildlife over time.

The areas upstream of the Ugum River are examples of this, having become badlands over time due to a combination of negligent off-roading, arson, and feral ungulates feeding on vegetation, according to Teddy Concepcion, GROW team lead and a UOG Sea Grant extension assistant. To restore a healthy Ugum ecosystem and watershed and for the badlands to thrive and potentially be cultivatable in the future, it will need increased plant biodiversity and rehabilitated soil.

"The ultimate goal is to reforest our lands to prevent any more sedimentation getting



Volunteers plant an *Acacia auriculiformis* (acacia) tree during a tree planting event on Dec. 18 at the Ugum watershed in Inalåhan. (UOG)

1,500 trees planted to prevent erosion into Ugum River



into our waters and to eliminate erosion of our lands," Concepcion said, adding that the Ugum River supplies two million gallons of water to southern residents daily. "It's hard to see now, but this area we're in was a lot higher, had a lot more soil, and a lot more organic matter. If we continue to let it be, there will no longer be an area here."

Volunteers planted native tree species, including *Morinda citrifolia* (ladda, or noni fruit), *Calophyllum inophyllum* (da'ok, or mastwood), and *Glochidion marianum* (åbas, duendes, or chosga) in areas with existing healthy soil. They also planted *Acacia auriculiformis* (acacia) in the badlands. Though acacia trees are not native to Guam, they benefit badlands by quickly fixating nitrogen and providing organic matter to rebuild the soil, Concepcion said, retaining ground moisture with their shade, and

"Cone-tainers" of *Acacia auriculiformis* (acacia) trees sit on a tree planting site on Dec. 18 at the Ugum watershed in Inalåhan. (UOG)

serving as windbreaks to keep other trees sturdy and protected from spreading fires.

"I'm super stoked that people want to help. I feel



Volunteers plant an *Acacia auriculiformis* (acacia) tree during a tree planting event on Dec. 18 at the Ugum watershed in Inalåhan. (UOG)

really good about it," Concepcion said. "I'm extremely grateful for everybody that came out today."

Christianna Ebeo, a youth

ambassador with the Guam Green Growth initiative and a member of AmeriCorps UOG, has been planting trees since she was in high school. She



Volunteers hike to a planting site during a tree planting event on Dec. 18 at the Ugum watershed in Inalåhan. (UOG)

made it a goal to assist with conservation efforts through outreach activities and talking to the public.

"I want to have children

of my own in the future, and it makes me happy knowing they get to experience all the greenery the island has to offer," she said. "Come out if you can. Would you want to pass this up? It's beautiful."

Christine Camacho Fajeran, Guam Department of Agriculture Forestry and Soil Resources division chief, also participated in the planting with other members of her forestry team.

"All I've got to say for this project is we need more of them. It's an amazing effort between UOG Sea Grant and all the other partners that come to the table," she said. "It thrills me to know that, island wide, these efforts that take place here mean the places where I grew up fishing, that I grew up hiking, are going to continue to be protected so that my kids and their kids will have the same opportunities, if not similar, or maybe better, than I had in my youth."

Volunteers and community partners are essential in being able to carry out efforts like this, said Austin Shelton, director for UOG Center for Island Sustainability and Sea Grant.

"By having community partners and volunteers, we're

able to put more trees in the ground and have a more positive impact for our environment," Shelton said. "If anyone wants to leave a lasting legacy for our island and do something great, tree planting is a wonderful way to do that."

Residents can look forward to another GROW tree planting event this July.

"It's good to help out for the future. It's a really nice feeling to come, bright and early on a Saturday, and help the island," said volunteer Jordan Suzuki.

UOG Sea Grant and the GROW initiative are supported by the Island Beautification Task Force, led by the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Guam; the Southern Guam Soil and Water Conservation District; the Guam Department of Agriculture; the U.S. Department of Agriculture; the U.S. Forest Service, and the Mayors' Council of Guam. (UOG)

G3 Conservation Corps seeking applicants for 2nd cohort

The recruitment period for the second cohort of the Guam Green Growth Conservation Corps, or G3, officially began on Monday and will continue until the application deadline of Sunday, Feb. 6.

The G3 Conservation Corps is a five-month workforce development program that aims to advance and apply 12 corps members' skills in the focus areas of agriculture and aquaculture, circular economy and zero waste, ocean conservation, invasive

species management, reforestation and watershed restoration, energy conservation and renewable energy, and island beautification. The 2022 program will take place from March to August this year.

Corps members will have the opportunity to collaborate with and learn alongside teams from partnering government agencies and private organizations in support of various conservation initiatives throughout the island while equipping themselves

for a brighter future.

Those interested in applying can submit their application at <https://guamgreengrowth.org>. Applications are due on Sunday, Feb. 6.

Applicants must be at least 18 years old, have reliable transportation, and be a U.S. citizen, national, or legal resident.

Selected applicants will be required to submit police and court clearances, purified protein derivative skin test results, proof of full COVID-19

vaccination, submit to a drug test, and undergo a physical examination.

G3 Conservation Corps members will receive a biweekly stipend of \$1,300. Members will earn up to 80 continuing education units from the university upon successful completion of the program.

The G3 Conservation Corps program is made possible through FY22 Guam Green Growth appropriation to the University of Guam. (UOG)

Life & Style

‘Spider-Man’ stays at No. 1 in fourth weekend

By LINDSEY BAHR
AP FILM WRITER

The glamorous spies of “The 355” were no competition for the movie theater’s reigning webslinger. Spider-Man’s box office dominance continued in its fourth weekend in theaters,

adding another \$33 million, according to studio estimates on Sunday. With \$668.8 million in North American ticket sales to date, “Spider-Man: No Way Home” is now the sixth highest grossing release of all time domestically. Globally, with \$1.5 billion and counting, it ranks in eighth place.

The only major new film this weekend was Universal’s “The 355,” an original spy thriller starring Jessica Chastain, Lupita Nyong’o, Diane Kruger and Penelope Cruz, which debuted in third place with \$4.8 million from 3,145 North American theaters. Directed by Simon Kingberg, re-

views for the film about a global coalition of female spies have been less than stellar: It holds a 27% on Rotten Tomatoes. But the audience scores have been more enthusiastic, especially from women, and about a third of the attendees

this weekend were over 45 — a demographic that has not gone out to movie theaters much during the pandemic. With a holiday weekend coming up, Jim Orr, Universal’s head of domestic distribution, said, “We think we’ll

have a nice runway.” “The 355” came in behind the animated “Sing 2,” also distributed by Universal, which grossed an estimated \$12 million in its third weekend in theaters, bringing its global total to \$190.8 million.

Indiana man arrested in Young Dolph’s death; 2nd man charged

INDIANAPOLIS (AP)—A Tennessee man wanted in the fatal shooting of rapper Young Dolph in his hometown of Memphis was captured Tuesday in Indiana, while another man was indicted on murder charges, authorities said. A grand jury indicted Cornelius Smith, 32, on first-degree murder and other charges in the shooting that killed Young Dolph, the Shelby County, Tennessee, District Attorney’s Office said. Smith, who was arrested last month on an auto-theft warrant involving the vehicle used in Young Dolph’s killing, was being held without bond. Separately, the U.S. Marshals Service said Justin

Johnson, 23, was arrested, after a murder warrant was issued for him earlier this month. The agency did not say where in Indiana that Johnson was found. Young Dolph, whose real name was Adolph Thornton Jr., was gunned down in a daylight ambush at a popular cookie shop on Nov. 17. U.S. Marshal Tyreece Miller, Memphis Police Chief C. J. Davis and Shelby County District Attorney General Amy Weirich said they would hold a joint press conference Wednesday to provide more details. The shooting stunned Memphis and shocked the entertainment world. City officials and community activ-

ists pointed to the killing as a symbol of the dangers of gun violence in Memphis, where more than 300 homicides were reported last year. Known for his depictions of tough street life and his independent approach to the music business, Young Dolph was admired for charitable works in Memphis. He organized Thanksgiving food giveaways, donated thousands of dollars to high schools, and paid rent and covered funeral costs for people in the Castalia Heights neighborhood where he was raised. When he was killed, the 36-year-old rapper was in Memphis to hand out Thanksgiving turkeys and visit a cancer center.

Tool, J. Cole, Stevie Nicks to headline Bonnaroo music fest

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP)—J. Cole, Tool and Stevie Nicks will headline this year’s Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival, which is set to return after a two-year hiatus because of the pandemic and weather. The lineup for the June 16-19 festival in Manchester, Tennessee, was released Tuesday and also includes The Chicks, Robert Plant and

Alison Krauss, 21 Savage, Machine Gun Kelly, Roddy Ricch, Flume and Illenium. Last year’s festival was set to go on with extra COVID-19 precautions in place for fans, but heavy rains from Hurricane Ida left the grounds unsafe for driving or camping. The festival takes place on a former farm in rural Tennessee about an hour

southeast of Nashville. Tickets go on sale Thursday. The 2020 festival was postponed to 2021 because of the pandemic. Other artists on the lineup include Bleachers, Lord Huron, Disclosure, The War on Drugs, Billy Strings, Porter Robinson, Nathaniel Rateliff & the Night Sweats and Herbie Hancock.

Mälkki could be 1st woman music director of NY Philharmonic



Susanna Mälkki conducts the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall in New York on Jan. 6, 2022. (CHRIS LEE/NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC VIA AP)

NEW YORK (AP)—Her arms at her side against her glimmering, long black jacket and her blond hair pulled into a ponytail, Susanna Mälkki soaked in several minutes of applause after a thrilling Carnegie Hall debut. She had conducted the New York Philharmonic in a challenging program, perceived as a possible prelude to becoming the first woman music director of an orchestra that started in 1842. “Of course, it’s always an honor to be mentioned in this

kind of context,” she said during an interview with The Associated Press the day before the Jan. 6 performance. “It’s really, really fun to be with the orchestra. But the ‘l’actualité,’ as they say in French: This something that the orchestra will take their time. They will try out a lot of people.” Musicians beamed as the audience erupted following the Philharmonic’s first Carnegie Hall appearance in six years, broadcast live on radio.

Leelanee Sterrett, the acting associate principal horn, detected a “focused energy” that Mälkki brought to the podium and called it “one of those performances where in the concert everything was kind of taken up a notch, dialed up a notch.” A native of Finland who turns 53 on March 13, Mälkki studied at the Sibelius Academy and London’s Royal Academy of Music, and she was mentored by Esa-Pekka Salonen.

Partner cast aside amid man’s personal struggles

DEAR ABBY: For the past three years I’ve been with a man I believe is the love of my life. Early on, he admitted to a porn addiction that has plagued him his entire life and sabotaged past relationships. With my support, he began his first real attempt at recovery, which included a team of mental health practitioners. His progress over the past three years, while not linear, has been tremendous. He’s an entirely different person. I would describe our relationship as 90% joyful, 10% agony (he has had four brief relapses, during which he has said incredibly hurtful things to me). I agree the cycle must be broken, and only he can do it. A week ago, he had a difficult relapse and ended our relationship. His therapist feels he needs to be on his own to focus on recovery. While I am devastated, I agree. But I can’t understand why he’s giving up on us forever and making big decisions like getting off the mortgage on the house we bought less than two years ago. He swears it has nothing to do with me, and that if it weren’t for this addiction, he would spend the rest of his life with me. If his plan is to live alone, be single or celibate, and focus on recovery, why wouldn’t he also pause on major financial decisions? Why is he so completely done when there is clearly hope for recovery and reconciliation?

BROKEN-HEARTED IN OREGON

DEAR BROKEN-HEARTED: You have involved yourself with someone who has a terrible track record when it comes to relationships. Whatever his plans for the future may be, he does not want a committed relationship with you, nor does he want the financial responsibility and the tie to you that the house represents, which is why he wants off the mortgage. It is now time for you to start looking after your own needs and goals. If you stay busy and don’t isolate yourself, it will lessen the pain you are feeling.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: My brother divorced his first wife 10 years ago. Since then, he has married a wonderful woman my family adores. The problem is, my ex-sister-in-law insists on showing up for family events, which makes these celebrations extremely awkward. Even her children recognize how uncomfortable her presence makes everyone. I don’t mind being the “bad guy” and telling her that she’s no longer welcome at family events, but I don’t want to cause an ugly scene. How can I diplomatically (but firmly) tell her to stay away? Any suggestions would be appreciated.

FLUMMOXED IN PHILADELPHIA

DEAR FLUMMOXED: What a sad situation. Your BROTHER, not you, should deliver the message to his ex,

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

well before she shows up at your next family event. He should inform her that when she shows up uninvited, her presence makes everyone uncomfortable, and it would be best that she not impose again. You could lessen the hurt by occasionally seeing her separately, depending upon the circumstances of the divorce.

■■■

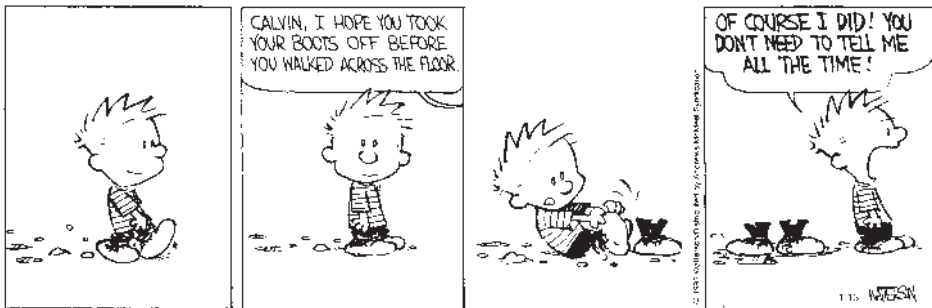
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Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset



The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy



CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Egg on
5 Science room
8 Arm bone
12 Actress
13 Hosp. area
14 Wedding cake layer
15 Bridge position
16 Not "agin"
17 "Snap out —!"
18 Monet or Debussy
20 Wards off
22 "—"
23 Poetica
24 Be sick
27 Healthy
32 Comic
33 Menagerie
34 Trio after M
35 Fish lover's deli order
38 Group of quail
39 Transcript no.

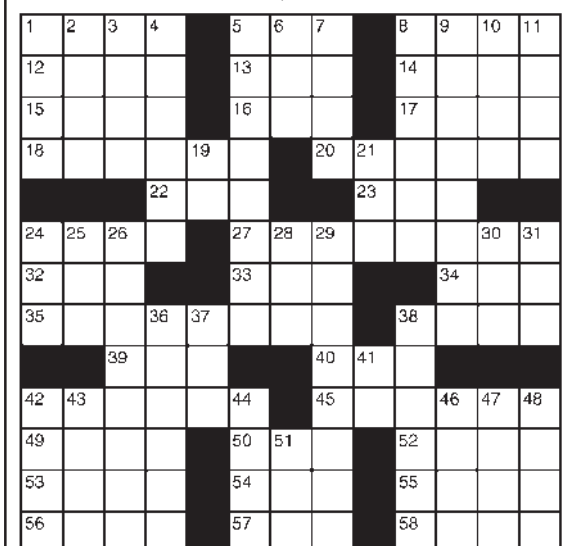
DOWN

1 Detail, briefly
2 Bell sound
3 —
4 Ceremony
5 Not enlarged or
6 Tennis
7 "Ironside" star
8 Perfect place
9 Game show
10 Astronaut
11 Armstrong
12 Sciences' partner
13 AMA member
14 Hearing thing
15 Drenched
16 Ostrich's kin
17 Palmist's prediction
18 Neither mate
19 Hit song by One-Republic
20 Calendar abbr.
21 Covert agent
22 Seem
23 Taunting laugh
24 Second-ary route
25 Concerning
26 Bargain
27 Perry's creator
28 Non-committal answer
29 Pleasing
30 Salinger girl
31 Marsh plant
32 Tram load

Solution time: 24 mins.

M	A	U	L	A	D	S	I	N	E	
E	N	T	O	H	U	R	E	R	E	
O	K	A	Y	F	I	N	E	R	O	L
W	A	H	O	O	I	T	U	N	E	S
L	G	B	T	H	M	M				
N	A	P	A	R	A	C	E	T	I	V
A	X		B	I	S	C	N	E	E	
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T	M	I		R	E	A	R			
R	E	L	A	T	E		C	O	R	A
O	L	I	N		S	I	C	E	W	I
B	A	N	E		I	D	A		N	O
S	L	E	D		C	O	I		S	I

Yesterday's answer 1-13



STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-800-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Liam Hemsworth, 32; Orlando Bloom, 45; Patrick Dempsey, 56; Julia Louis-Dreyfus, 61.

Happy Birthday: Stay on track, keep your life simple and put a solid plan in place before you initiate a change. A thoughtful approach to life and how you live, coupled with being mindful of others, will help you achieve the success you are searching for and encourage better relationships with others. Wise decisions are your path to victory and a stress-free future. Your numbers are 3, 10, 18, 23, 34, 36, 42.

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Stay focused on what you are trying to achieve. Connect with people who can help you reach your goal. A conversation, meeting or interview will give you the platform you need to flaunt what you have to offer. Speak your mind. ****

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Look at the possibilities before making a decision that can change the way you live. Taking a step into unknown territory can be daunting if you haven't done your research. Leave nothing to chance, and you'll have less stress and regret. ***

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Stick to what works for you. Don't exaggerate, overreact, take anything for granted. Use your intelligence and mark your journey in detail. Don't deviate off course or let anyone lead you astray. Be smart, and good results will follow. ***

CANCER (June 21-July 22): You'll gravitate toward odd individuals and hobbies that give you something to consider. Reflect on the past, and you will recognize

what to do to reach your goal. Love is featured, and personal improvements are favored. ***

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Partner with someone who shares your beliefs, and together you will be a driving force that makes a difference. A passionate approach to life, coupled with a positive attitude and the ability to recognize what's legitimate, will pay off. ****

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Wait for the perfect time to make a move. Don't let emotions drag you in a direction you aren't ready to go. Focus on personal growth, physical changes and deciding what you want to do next. Nurture a partnership with someone special. **

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Network, set up meetings, socialize and start conversations that can help you learn more about the possibilities that exist, and you'll find a way to fine-tune your skills to suit trends and accommodate a niche that can lead to less stress. *****

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Worry less about what you cannot change, and put more effort into what's possible. Broaden your awareness by tuning in to what loved ones are going through. Understanding and compassion will help you help others. Romance is encouraged. ***

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Don't be fooled by appearances. Someone will offer false information or exaggerate about who they are or what they can do for you. Follow the dots, and check off every box before committing to something that requires time, effort or cash. ***

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Keep working toward your goal until you feel confident that you have mastered what you set out to do. Embark on a journey that incorporates diversity and originality into how you use your skills, and challenge yourself to do better. ***



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Concentrate on your home, family and maintaining a stable environment. Refuse to let anyone sway your opinion or talk you into something you don't want to do. Put your energy where it will bring the best return and satisfy your need. *****



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Make smart decisions. Say no to over-the-top behavior, regardless of temptation. Don't take a risk or let an emotional situation lead to regret. Gravitate toward people you can trust to look out for you. Personal growth and romance are favored. **

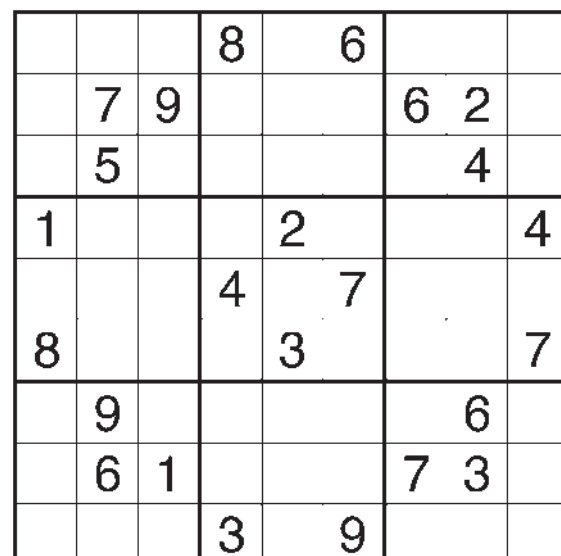
Birthday Baby: You are unique, intelligent and caring. You are outgoing and helpful.

☾: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ☼: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ☼☼: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ☼☼☼: Aim high; start new projects. ☼☼☼☼: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green



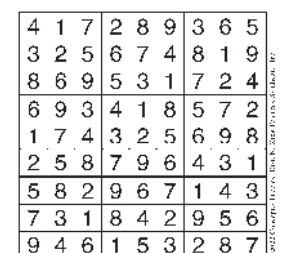
Difficulty Level ★★★

1/13

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer



Difficulty Level: ★★★

WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

REMEMBERING: MEGXIT

Solution: 8 letters

E Y A I D E M O N A R C H Y N
M E L I Z A B E T H E I R A S
A N S O L D R E C N E P S P A
N O E S U M M I T C O E B E L
A M M K R O Y A L H L Y M R A
I A E M O U N T B A T T E N R
D R M A I L L I W R P L A D Y
S K E A I N E F I L I C A R E
S L G A E N O G D E L W R C I
E E H T S E A N G S I A A S C
C I A E C M A N L N H E Q A I
N H N N I L I P D I P U T M L
I C I L G K R S A S E L W O B
R R L A G E O R G E X I T H U
P A R K E R D Y N P L A N T P

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1/13

Archie, Army, Bowles, Camilla, Care, Charles, Doria, Duke, Elizabeth, Exit, George, Harry, Heir, Kate, King, Lady, Leap, Life, Line, Markle, Media, Meghan, Memes, Monarchy, Money, Mountbatten, Name, Parker, Peace, Philip, Plan, Prince of Wales, Princess Diana, Public, Queen, Ragland, Repay, Royal, Salary, Senior, Sold, Spencer, Summit, Thomas, William, Windsor

Yesterday's Answer: Recorded

The NEW Treasures 46 and 47 can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6430.

Djokovic clarifies movements, Australian visa saga continues

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—Novak Djokovic knew he had tested positive for COVID-19 when he attended a newspaper interview and photo shoot at his tennis center in Serbia last month, saying Wednesday he made an “error of judgement” and should have immediately gone into isolation.

Djokovic moved to clarify “ongoing misinformation” about his movements while he was infectious last month and about errors on the travel document he used to enter Australia, where his visa was revoked and then reinstated in a COVID-19 vaccination saga that has overshadowed the days leading up to the Australian Open.

A statement was posted on Djokovic’s social media accounts while the men’s tennis No. 1 was in Rod Laver Arena holding a practice session against Tristan Schoolkate, a 20-year-old Australian.

The nine-time and defending Australian Open champion is in limbo before the year’s first tennis major starts next Monday, a week after he won a legal battle allowing him to stay in the country.

But he still faces the prospect of deportation because he’s not vaccinated against COVID-19, a decision entirely at the discretion of Australia’s immigration minister if deemed to be in the public interest.

Reports emerged that Djokovic attended events in his native Serbia last month after testing positive on Dec. 16, including presenting awards to children on Dec. 17. There’s also been speculation that errors on his immigration form could potentially result in the cancellation of his visa.

On the form, Djokovic said he had not traveled in the 14 days before his flight to Australia. The Monte Carlo-based athlete was seen in Spain and Serbia in that two-week period.

Djokovic on Wednesday described the speculation as “hurtful” and said he wanted to address it in the interest of “alleviating broader concern in the community about my presence in Australia.”

Djokovic said he’d taken rapid tests that were negative and he was asymptomatic in the days before he received his positive result from an approved PRC test he undertook out of an “abundance of caution” after attending a basketball game on Dec. 14 “where it was reported that a number of people tested positive.”

He received the result late Dec. 17 and said he scrapped all his commitments except the long-standing interview with L’Equipe.

“I felt obligated to go ahead ... but did ensure I socially



Defending men’s champion Serbia’s Novak Djokovic practices on Rod Laver Arena ahead of the Australian Open tennis championship in Melbourne, Australia, Wednesday, Jan. 12, 2022.

distanced and wore a mask except when my photograph was being taken,” Djokovic said in the statement. “While I went home after the interview to isolate for the required period, on reflection, this was an error of judgement and I accept that I should have rescheduled the commitment.”

He addressed the travel declaration by saying it was submitted on his behalf by his support team and that “my agent sincerely apologizes for the administrative mistake in ticking the incorrect box.”

“This was a human error and certainly not deliberate,” he wrote. “The team has provided additional information to the Australian Government to clarify this matter.”

At issue is whether he has a valid exemption to rules requiring vaccination to enter Australia since he recently recovered from COVID-19.

The decision could take a while. Immigration Minister Alex Hawke’s office issued a statement saying Djokovic’s legal team had filed further documents against the the potential

cancellation of his visa and added: “Naturally, this will affect the timeframe for a decision.”

There’s growing concern in the community, meanwhile, with COVID-19 cases surging.

Victoria state, whose capital Melbourne is hosting the Australian Open starting next week, reported 21 deaths Wednesday along with 40,127 new cases.

Deputy Premier James Merlino said the state’s healthcare system is strained, with around 6,600 workers off duty after testing positive or coming into

close contact with a positive case, and new pandemic orders are coming into force to make booster shots mandatory for critical workers.

Hobart, Australia-based immigration lawyer Greg Barnes told The Associated Press that if Hawke does take action, he could choose to simply cancel Djokovic’s visa or give the tennis star notice of his intention to cancel it.

Barnes said Hawke has “a personal power,” which means he doesn’t have to accord natural justice if he decides it’s in the public interest to cancel the visa.

If Djokovic’s visa is canceled, his lawyers could go back to court to apply for an injunction that would prevent him from being forced to leave the country.

Hawke “can go the natural justice route (but) he doesn’t have to comply with natural justice, so he can just cancel it,” Barnes said. “Then you have to go to court to try to get that set aside and that’s very difficult.”

If the government does issue a notice of intent, Barnes said it could give Djokovic five to nine days to respond, depending on when he receives it.

“That might be a way of giving Djokovic a chance in the tournament and then kicking him out at the end of that,” Barnes said. “In my experience, it’s relatively rare for them to change their mind.”

By **HOWARD FENDRICH**
AP TENNIS WRITER

Novak Djokovic’s bid to get around rules requiring players at the Australian Open to be vaccinated against COVID-19 is still in limbo.

Two panels approved his request for a medical exemption in order to enter Victoria state — where the year’s first Grand Slam tennis tournament is held — based on having tested positive in the past six months for the illness caused by the novel coronavirus.

Djokovic’s visa was canceled by border officials when he arrived in Australia, before a judge overturned that and said the 34-year-old from Serbia could stay. As of Wednesday, Djokovic’s case was in the hands of Australia’s immigration minister, Alex Hawke, who has the power to reject the visa and make the top-ranked player leave the country.

Djokovic is a nine-time champion at the Australian Open, including each of the past three years. He owns 20 Grand Slam singles titles in all, tying him with Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal for the most won by a man in tennis history.

Here is a look at the timeline of events involving Djokovic’s trip to Australia, from a com-

TIMELINE: Novak Djokovic’s bid to compete at Australian Open

ment about COVID-19 vaccinations nearly two years ago to his attempts Wednesday to clarify some elements of the case in his first extensive comments about it:

April 2020: As the coronavirus pandemic rages, Djokovic issues a statement, saying, “Personally I am opposed to the vaccination against COVID-19 in order to be able to travel. But if it becomes compulsory, I will have to make a decision whether to do it, or not.”

June 2020: With the professional tennis tours on hiatus because of the pandemic, Djokovic organizes a series of exhibition matches in Serbia and Croatia with no rules requiring social distancing or masking. The Adria Tour is called off after some players get COVID-19; Djokovic and his wife, Jelena, test positive.

Nov. 19, 2021: Confirming an edict made by the Victorian state government in late October, tournament director Craig Tiley says everyone at the 2022 Australian Open must be vaccinated for COVID-19. Djokovic’s vaccine status is unknown at the time.

Dec. 8, 2021: Victoria state Deputy Premier James Merlino

says medical exemptions for the vaccine policy would not be “a loophole for privileged tennis players” and would only be possible in “exceptional circumstances, if you have an acute medical condition.”

Dec. 14, 2021: Djokovic attends a professional basketball game in Belgrade and is photographed hugging several players from both teams, including some who later tested positive.

Dec. 16, 2021: Djokovic tests positive for COVID-19 in Serbia, although that is not public knowledge until revealed by court documents in January. He later says he did not know the result until Dec. 17.

Dec. 17, 2021: Djokovic attends an event in Belgrade honoring youth tennis players. Parents post photos on social media showing Djokovic and the young players without masks. Djokovic later says he was asymptomatic, took an antigen test before the event that showed he was negative, and only received the positive PCR result after the event.

Dec. 18, 2021: Knowing he tested positive, Djokovic does an interview and photo shoot with the French newspaper L’Equipe. He acknowledges

weeks later: “On reflection, this was an error of judgement.”

Dec. 22, 2021: According to court documents, Djokovic tests negative for COVID-19 in Serbia.

Dec. 29, 2021: Djokovic withdraws from Serbia’s team for the ATP Cup, days before the competition is due to begin in Sydney. No reason is given.

Jan. 1, 2022: Tiley is asked in a TV interview about Djokovic’s status for the Australian Open and responds: “There’s quite a bit to play out and I think it will play out in the coming days.”

Jan. 4, 2022: Djokovic posts on Instagram a photo of himself at an airport with a caption that reads, in part: “I’m heading Down Under with an exemption permission.” Tennis Australia follows with a statement confirming Djokovic is on his way to the country with a medical exemption “granted following a rigorous review process involving two separate independent panels of medical experts.” Neither Djokovic nor Tennis Australia reveals the basis for his exemption. Tiley says a “handful” of exemptions had been granted out of 26 applications from players or others. A public outcry bubbles up

on social media among Australians while Djokovic’s flight to Melbourne is in the air.

Jan. 5, 2022: Djokovic arrives at Melbourne Tullamarine Airport.

Jan. 6, 2022: After being detained for about eight hours upon arrival, Djokovic is denied entry to the country and his visa is canceled. He is sent to an immigration hotel, where he remains for four nights. The Australian Border Force says Djokovic failed to meet entry requirements. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison tweets: “Rules are rules, especially when it comes to our borders.”

Jan. 10, 2022: As part of his legal attempt to overturn the visa cancellation, Djokovic submits an affidavit that says he is not vaccinated for COVID-19. Federal Circuit Court Judge Anthony Kelly reinstates Djokovic’s visa, ruling the player was not given enough time to speak to his lawyers before the decision to deny him entry was made at the airport. Kelly orders the government to release Djokovic from immigration detention. Hours later, Djokovic practices at Melbourne Park.

Jan. 11, 2022: With his sta-

tus still uncertain, Djokovic is installed as the No. 1 seed for the men’s field at the Australian Open. The tournament strictly follows the current rankings in determining seedings and Djokovic is ranked No. 1; he has spent more weeks atop the ATP than any other man in the history of the men’s professional tour’s computerized rankings.

Jan. 12, 2022: Djokovic’s most extensive public comments on the matter come via a post on social media that is put up by someone while he is practicing at the Australian Open’s main stadium. He acknowledges a mistake on his travel declaration for Australia, which failed to indicate that he had been in multiple countries over the prior two weeks. Djokovic blames his agent for checking the wrong box on the form, calling it “a human error and certainly not deliberate.” He also clarifies the timing of his positive COVID-19 test from December and subsequent whereabouts.

Jan. 13, 2022: The Australian Open draw is scheduled to be held, determining the men’s and women’s singles brackets for the tournament.

Jan. 17, 2022: Play is scheduled to begin at Melbourne Park. The men’s singles final is Jan. 30.

Booker, Suns top rolling Raptors, 99-95



TORONTO (AP)—Devin Booker scored 16 points, including the go-ahead basket with 1:02 remaining, and Chris Paul had 15 points and 12 assists as the Phoenix Suns beat Toronto 99-95 on Tuesday night to snap the Raptors' longest winning streak of the season at six games.

Jae Crowder scored 19 points, Deandre Ayton had 16 and Mikal Bridges added 12 as the Suns improved to 31-9, matching the franchise's best record through 40 games.

OG Anunoby scored 25 points, Pascal Siakam had 22 and Fred VanVleet added 21 for the Raptors, who lost for the first time since Dec. 28 against Philadelphia.

Chris Boucher had 13 points and 16 rebounds for the Raptors, who played without injured starters Scottie Barnes and Gary Trent Jr.



Toronto Raptors forward Chris Boucher (25) shoots over Phoenix Suns forward Jae Crowder (99) during the second half of an NBA basketball game in Toronto on Tuesday, Jan. 11, 2022.

Grizzlies 116, Warriors 108

In Memphis, Tenn., Ja Morant scored 29 points, including five in the final minute, and Memphis beat Golden State for its 10th straight win.

Ziaire Williams and Tyus Jones had 17 points each for Memphis. Jones keyed a fourth-quarter rally that put the Grizzlies ahead for good. He finished 6 for 8 from the field, including connecting on all five of his 3-point attempts.

Stephen Curry led the

Warriors with 27 points, while Klay Thompson finished with 14 points. Andrew Wiggins and Gary Payton II scored 13 each.

The teams had a closely played game in the second half until consecutive 3-pointers by Jones gave Memphis a 109-100 lead with 3:33 left to play. That was enough of a buffer for the Grizzlies to keep their franchise-record win streak going, Memphis holding Golden State to 18 points in the fourth quarter.

Bulls 133, Pistons 87

In Chicago, Nikola Vučević scored 22 points, DeMar DeRozan had 20 points and 12 rebounds, and Chicago routed Detroit.

DeRozan sat for most of the final 16 minutes but still added seven assists. Eastern Conference-leading Chicago won after its season-best nine-game winning streak ended Sunday in Dallas.

Josh Jackson scored 16 points and Saddiq Bey added 14 for the Pistons, who had

won two straight.

The Bulls led 61-52 at intermission and quickly turned it into a blowout by starting the second half on a 17-0 run that included four straight 3-pointers; two each from Derrick Jones Jr. and Vučević. The Pistons helped dig the hole by missing their first seven shots and turning the ball over three times during the four-minute stretch.

Clippers 87, Nuggets 85

In Los Angeles, Amir Coffey

had 18 points, Reggie Jackson scored 11 of his 13 in the fourth quarter and Los Angeles rallied from a 25-point deficit in the second half for a stunning victory.

Terance Mann scored nine of his 13 points in the fourth quarter for Los Angeles, which won for the fourth time in 10 games since Paul George joined Kawhi Leonard on its lengthy injured list. The Clippers won despite managing a meager 28 points in the lowest-scoring first half in the NBA this season and then

falling behind 59-34 midway through the third period.

Denver scored just seven points in the next 10 minutes, allowing the Clippers to mount their improbable comeback.

Aaron Gordon scored a season-high 30 points and Nikola Jokic had 21 points, 13 rebounds and eight assists for the Nuggets

Wizards 122, Thunder 118

In Washington, Kentavious Caldwell-Pope hit a go-ahead 3-pointer with 30.8 seconds remaining and Washington beat Oklahoma City despite being without star Bradley Beal because of health and safety protocols.

The Thunder lost their fifth straight game, and the key possession came with about a half-minute to play and the score tied at 118. The Wizards worked the shot clock down, and Caldwell-Pope's attempt from the right wing went in off the glass. He responded by holding both arms out, apparently in relief, disbelief or both.

Luguentz Dort missed everything on a 3 at the other end, and Kyle Kuzma made a free throw with 13.3 seconds left.

Kuzma led the Wizards with 29 points, and Spencer Dinwiddie had 22 points and 10 assists. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander led the Thunder with 32 points, including two straight layups that tied it at 118.

Pelicans 128, Timberwolves 125

In New Orleans, Brandon Ingram capped a 33-point, nine-assist performance by hitting three 3-pointers in the final 1:13 — the last with less than a second left — and New Orleans edged Minnesota.

Ingram went 6 for 7 from 3-point territory and his most pivotal shots came in a long-range exchange with Minnesota's Anthony Edwards, whose fifth 3 of the game cut New Orleans' lead to 117-115 before Ingram hit from the right wing while being fouled for a four-point play.

After Edwards came right back with a left-wing 3, Ingram hit another from deep to make it 124-118 with 50.5 seconds left.

Malik Beasley's sixth 3 of the game cut it to 124-123 with 12.9 seconds left, and the Wolves fouled Devonte' Graham, who made one of two free throws with 9.2 seconds to go. Minnesota tied it at 125 on D'Angelo Russell's driving scoop with 3.6 seconds left, only to see Ingram's rainbow 3 from more than 25 feet swish through for the win.

Analysis: The top performers as NBA reaches midway point

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
AP BASKETBALL WRITER

The NBA season has reached the midway point, with a record number of players already having gotten minutes. Virus-related issues have forced every team to scramble on some nights to find players with plenty of surprises and, yes, plenty of disappointments.

With basically 50% of the games played, there's enough of a body of work to start making some informed looks at the league's awards.

MVP

The contenders: Giannis Antetokounmpo, Milwaukee; Kevin Durant, Brooklyn; Nikola Jokic, Denver; Stephen Curry, Golden State; DeMar DeRozan, Chicago; LeBron James, Los Angeles Lakers.

There is still a second half of the season. Right now, anyone from this group of six players — and probably a few other names, too — has a valid case for the award.

Antetokounmpo is on his way to averaging at least 28

points and 11 rebounds for a third consecutive season, something nobody has done since Karl Malone from 1989-92. Jokic's numbers are just as good, and maybe even a little better, than they were last year when he was the runaway winner. Curry has the Warriors right back in title contention and now he's got Klay Thompson next to him again. DeRozan has led the Bulls into the role as official NBA surprise of the first half. James is carrying the Lakers out of necessity and somehow isn't losing a step in Year 19. And Durant, well, he's just unguardable.

The midway pick: Durant. The Nets have had plenty of things not going according to plan, yet they're still near the top of the East because quite simply Durant is just that good.

DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR

The contenders: Draymond Green, Golden State; Giannis Antetokounmpo, Milwaukee; Rudy Gobert, Utah; Jrue Holiday, Milwaukee; Matisse Thy-

bulle, Philadelphia.

Gobert, Antetokounmpo and Green have combined to win the last five awards. And it's deserved, though it's not uncommon for NBA players to question the methodology voters have when picking the award. (Note: it should be about more than steals and blocks stats.)

The midway pick: Green. Everyone talks about Golden State's offense and Curry's shooting, and rightly so. The Warriors are a nightmare because of the way they defend, and Green is the leader.

SIXTH MAN OF THE YEAR

The contenders: Tyler Herro, Miami; Carmelo Anthony, Los Angeles Lakers; Kelly Oubre Jr., Charlotte; Buddy Hield, Sacramento; Jordan Clarkson, Utah.

It's a pretty simple rule. If a team has someone have a big game off the bench, that team usually wins; the teams with a reserve that scores 25 points have won about 70% of their games this season. And Herro

— who would probably be a frontrunner for Most Improved Player right now, too — has 11 games of 25 or more points off the Heat bench this season.

The midway pick: Herro. In a runaway.

COACH OF THE YEAR

The contenders: Billy Donovan, Chicago; J.B. Bickerstaff, Cleveland; Taylor Jenkins, Memphis; Erik Spoelstra, Miami; Steve Kerr, Golden State.

Spoelstra hasn't won this award but this season might be his best coaching job to date. The Heat are a true contender, have played well over half their games to date on the road, and haven't had Bam Adebayo and Jimmy Butler very often. Kerr's brilliance, if anyone forgot it exists, has been on full display this season. But the biggest surprises in the NBA to date might be the Cavaliers, Bulls and Grizzlies. It'll be tough, though not impossible, for Cleveland to keep this going because of injuries, but the Bulls and Grizzlies look very much for real.

The midway pick: Dono-

van, in a very close call over Jenkins. Nobody thought the Bulls would be atop the East at this point. Chicago just keeps rolling with punches, and Donovan is the calm in the eye of the storm.

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

The contenders: Cade Cunningham, Detroit; Jalen Green, Houston; Franz Wagner, Orlando; Evan Mobley, Cleveland; Scottie Barnes, Toronto.

These are the top five rookie scorers, but that's not entirely why they are the five to make this list. Cunningham is finding his groove, Green has been explosive and Wagner might be way ahead of whatever schedule the Magic envisioned for his development. What sets two of these guys apart, however, is how they have impacted winning. Barnes is in a tremendous spot, learning from winners in Toronto. Mobley, however, went to a place where little was expected and has excelled.

The midway pick: Mobley, who is only going to get better.

Tamondong wants NMIBF to adopt NFHS rules

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Former Saipan referee Robert Tamondong wants 18-and-under basketball leagues and tournaments in the CNMI to adopt the rules of the National Federation of High School.

Tamondong, who is now officiating games in Guam after moving to the U.S. territory last September, said NFHS rules are more ideal and suitable for young players as opposed to FIBA rules that are more geared toward older more experienced players.

FIBA stands for Fédération Internationale de Basketball and is the organization that governs the sport of basketball worldwide.

“It’s different here because it’s high school rules. We are not using FIBA rules. NFHS rules develop young players. FIBA is international rules and I think it shouldn’t be applied there for the young play-

BOTTOMS

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ticipants and volunteers of the event. The 6th Saipan Duathlon was sponsored by IT&E.

Proceeds from TRAC’s 6th Saipan Duathlon will go to the sport federation’s preparations for the triathlon event of this year’s Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022 that the CNMI will be hosting for the very first time.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS					
EASTERN CONFERENCE					
Atlantic Division					
	W	L	Pct	GB	
Brooklyn	25	14	.641	—	
Philadelphia	23	16	.590	2	
Toronto	20	18	.526	4½	
Boston	20	21	.488	6	
New York	20	21	.488	6	
Southeast Division					
Miami	25	15	.625	—	
Charlotte	22	19	.537	3½	
Washington	21	20	.512	4½	
Atlanta	17	22	.436	7½	
Orlando	7	34	.171	18½	
Central Division					
Chicago	27	11	.711	—	
Milwaukee	26	17	.605	3½	
Cleveland	23	18	.561	5½	
Indiana	15	26	.366	13½	
Detroit	9	31	.225	19	
WESTERN CONFERENCE					
Southwest Division					
Memphis	29	14	.674	—	
Dallas	22	18	.550	5½	
San Antonio	15	25	.375	12½	
New Orleans	15	26	.366	13	
Houston	11	31	.262	17½	
Northwest Division					
Utah	28	13	.683	—	
Denver	20	19	.513	7	
Minnesota	20	21	.488	8	
Portland	16	24	.400	11½	
Oklahoma City	13	27	.325	14½	
Pacific Division					
Phoenix	31	9	.775	—	
Golden State	30	10	.750	1	
L.A. Lakers	21	20	.512	10½	
L.A. Clippers	21	21	.500	11	
Sacramento	16	27	.372	16½	

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Robert Tamondong, right, poses with fellow referees before a pre-season high school championship game in Guam.

ers,” he said.

Tamondong, who just tuned 60 years old last week, hopes the Northern Mariana Islands Basketball Federation will use NFHS rules in their developmental leagues, which include high school, middle school, and elementary competitions.

“The federation there should adopt high school rules. Even the referees should also be trained to officiate using high school rules,” he said.

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as 18 sports. The second option is the CNMI will take the hosting duties. The third is the CNMI and Guam will split the sports with half taking place in the latter and the other half in the former. The fourth, which Tan concedes is the most doable, is individual sports will arrange their respective Marianas Cup events against their counterpart sports federations in Guam.

AWAY

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commit suicide before and was depressed but the mile-a-days has kept the dark thoughts away. It started as a weight loss [program] but developed into something more. It developed into a method for me to combat depression and anxiety. It’s effective and that’s why I have zero intention of ever retiring the streak. If I miss a day then I will happily reset to Day Zero again and start over,” he said.

Like everything else, the most difficult part of starting a streak is the very beginning and Dela Cruz said it wasn’t any different for him five years ago.

“As you know weight loss is always the starting factor. It started out as my 2017 New Year’s resolution with my nephew T.J. Manglona, co-owner of Tribe Marianas. He

Tamondong, who now works as an accountant for Island Equipment Co., said NFHS rules encourage more teamwork and discourage one-on-one plays.

“High school rules will help coaches to design faster plays as their players need to pass the ball within 4 seconds. If you’re holding or dribbling the ball for 5 seconds it’s a violation so the ball must rotate or pass in order to avoid a viola-

Tan said the genesis of the Marianas Cup idea came about following the postponement of the 2022 Micronesian Games. He said a lot of athletes training for the 2022 Games in the Marshall Islands would effectively have to wait another year to compete in a regional event.

The Marianas Cup, Tan said, would give athletes the impetus to train year-round because they always have a yearly competition to look forward to.

told me let’s start a mile-a-day jog challenge to lose weight. Just 30 days. I really didn’t want to do it at first. He actually dragged me out of bed that day to do it. If it wasn’t for him I wouldn’t have started it. Looking back now I can’t believe I kept my 2017 New Year’s resolution going for five years now.”

Now 1,826 consecutive days and 5,051 miles later, Dela Cruz said the most challenging run of his streak was when he took part in the 2021 Boston Marathon virtually last Oct. 11.

“That was against my doctor’s advisement with an out-of-commission right Achilles. I had to fight the tear from Mile 1 to Mile 26.2. I would’ve quit too if it wasn’t for Gerald Galang powering me through the last half of it. That pain was excruciating.”

At this point, Dela Cruz said honestly there’s no running

tion,” he said.

He added that he’s open to returning to Saipan to help teach referees and NMIBF officials how to implement the NFHS rules to their grassroots programs.

“I really want to go there and share my experience. But the high incidence of COVID-19 there makes it next to impossible for me to fly in there,” he said.

Based in Indianapolis, Indiana, NFHS is the national leader and advocate for high school athletics as well as fine

and performing arts programs. It promotes amateur sports participation and athletics programs at the high school level.

With regards to Tamondong’s experience officiating games in Guam, he said it’s more challenging in his new home as players are faster and bigger.

“My first time to officiate was a preseason varsity game and players were tall. In fact the tallest I’ve seen in my first game here was 6’6.” The competition here is definitely higher than compared to Saipan,

which is good for a referee like me here.”

Tamondong apparently gave a good impression of himself that he was eventually assigned to the championship game.

“It’s good they assigned me to a championship game as I was able to show what I’m capable of in terms of officiating matches. I received good feedback from my colleagues specially in controlling the high school varsity game between St. Paul and Father Duenas High School.”

Tritons open basketball tournament with 76-53 loss

The Imperials basketball club handed the University of Guam Triton Men’s Basketball Team its first loss of the “Take It 2 the South” tournament on Tuesday night at the Talofofo Gym. With a short-handed team of only five players, head coach Dana Holmes and assistant coach Mike Cottrell stepped in and joined the team on the court.

The Tritons had a slow start to the game—only scoring after five minutes had passed in the first half. The team managed to stay close to the Imperials during the first 20 minutes, but the gap widened to 32-21 by halftime.

The Imperials continued their strong performance and pulled further away in the second half to win with a final score of 76-53.

In his first game playing for the Tritons, University of Guam junior Diane’ “D” Blackmon led the Tritons with 17 points, scoring four in the first half and 15 in the second half. Coach Holmes joined Blackmon as the only other



TRITON ATHLETICS

Diane’ Blackmon scores a free throw for the Tritons. He scored the team-high 17 points for the University of Guam’s opening game of the “Take It 2 the South” tournament on Jan. 11 in Talofofo Gym.

double-digit scorer for UOG with 17 points.

For the Imperials, Chris Conner topped the team with 36 points and six three-pointers. Three former Tritons were on the Imperials’ roster: A.J. Carlos, Dezdin Fikes, and Raffy Sablan.



UOG played again at 8pm last night in an elimination game against team Pudding. The game will determine which team advances to the next match on Tuesday. The Triton games are recorded and posted on the Triton Athletics YouTube channel. (PR)

every single day is what keeps me going everyday.”

Incredibly, he has only gone through 18 pairs of running shoes in the five years since he started running everyday in 2017.

“The first year of the streak I kept a pair for 365 days and it was the Asics Nimbus 21. I’ll tell you Asics has the toughest shoes for sure out of all the brands. I ran that thing to zero rubber that year. I had zero injuries in 2017-2018 with that pair!”

Dela Cruz said his biggest tip for people aspiring to be streak runners is just enjoy the run.

“It’s never about the numbers, the pace times, the mileage, or how your body looks. This is something no one can take from you. If it means that much to you as it does to me you’ll find a way to get your mile in. A wise mentor once told me ‘find reasons to suc-

ceed not excuses for failure.’ You have 1,440 minutes in a day like everyone else. You can put in 20 minutes a day to get it in. People take more time selecting a Netflix show than it takes me to run a mile.”

As for as his favorite running spot on island, Dela Cruz goes back to where it all began.

“I started at Beach Road Pathway at exactly the 0.00 marker where it begins. From the 0.00 marker to the Japanese Tank Memorial is 1.25 miles. It will always be my favorite route. I have so much memories with everyone I ran with or run into on there and sunsets are always breathtaking. That’s my stomping grounds.”

Next up for Dela Cruz is to mark his 2,000 days of keeping the streak alive. “And people told me to quit at the first 365 day mark... 2,000 days is right around the corner!”



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Tamondong wants NMIBF to adopt NFHS rules

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'Mile-a-days kept dark thoughts away'

By MARK RABAGO mark_rabago@saipantribune.com ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Edward Dela Cruz Jr. officially became a 5x365 Day Run Challenge finisher yesterday morning when he ran 5 miles from the "zero marker" in Oleai to just right before the Garapan Fishing Base.

The 30-year-old Airport Rescue Fire Fighting member is just glad that he was able to accomplish the feat as the past year he was diagnosed with a painful Achilles injury that almost



snapped his mile-a-day challenge streak that started in Jan. 12, 2017. "I'm happy, relieved, and thankful. I didn't think I would finish it this year when I injured my feet in September. Thankfully under the careful supervision of Dr. T.J. Bellama and Joe Jimenez at Eucan Medical they were able to help me continue my streak and nurse me back to full health."

As already told in a previous article, the Run Saipan president started his streak as a way to overcome a debilitating depression.

"It was a mental health thing. I wanted to

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Edward Dela Cruz Jr. holds up his hands to indicate he became a 5x365 Day Run Challenge finisher yesterday morning.



LAO ZHANG

Edward Dela Cruz Jr. competes in this file photo from the Gecko 5,000 last Sept. 11 at Banzai Cliff.

Bottoms Up rises in mixed division



MARK RABAGO

Rosemarie Chisato, left, is escorted to the finish line by Bottoms Up teammate Noel Altamirano in Triathlon Association of the CNMI's 6th Saipan Duathlon last Saturday from Banzai Cliff in Marpi.

By MARK RABAGO mark_rabago@saipantribune.com ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Bottoms Up proved that athletes that socially drink together make better teammates after running away with the mixed division title of Triathlon Association of the CNMI's 6th Saipan Duathlon last Saturday from Banzai Cliff in Marpi.



and cyclist Noel Altamirano expertly negotiated the 5-kilometer run, 20-km bike, and 2.5-km run with a time of 1:13:24 to beat the Alice in Wonderland pair of Eunice Xu and Wilfredo Barbo who came in at 1:14:10

Asked how they teamed up, Chisato and Altamirano joked around and volunteered that they usually get-together with

friends and on occasion have a drink or two, hence the team name.

"We're friends. We met in the 'bottoms up,'" Altamirano said while gesturing a drinking session. "The bike [portion] was good. We're always training in bike... and drinking."

The 56-year-old Marianas Trekking staff said the holidays didn't stop him from training, as he continued with his 5-6 day-a-week training regimen.

Chisato, who only missed the Turkey Trot in Run Saipan's 2021 calendar, said she hasn't missed a beat in her training schedule as well.

The 45-year-old Paris Croissant Bakery staff said she usually runs 4-5 days a week, which proved handy in helping Bottoms Up to the 6th Saipan Duathlon win.

TRAC president Manny Sitchon, who also took part in the event albeit as a solo competitor, congratulated all the winners of the 6th Saipan Duathlon and thanked all the par-

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'Marianas Cup is a great idea'

By MARK RABAGO mark_rabago@saipantribune.com ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The Northern Marianas National Paddle Sports Federation is backing the establishment of a Marianas Cup-type tournament, which is an annual CNMI-Guam competition for all sports patterned after the soccer federation's Marianas Cup.

NMNPSF president Justin Andrew said he fully supports Northern Marianas Sports Association president Jerry Tan's call for the creation of the Marianas Cup among all sports in the CNMI.

"The Marianas Cup is a great idea. This will urge our local athletes to continuously train and compete and improve their game," he said.

Andrew, who also heads the Saipan Paddling Club, said the formation of the Marianas Cup would also improve NMNPSF's relationship with its counterpart in Guam.

"I think for now as we jumpstart this Marianas Cup,

it's best that each federation coordinate with their federation counterparts in Guam for the competition plans. This should also include the sharing of resources like training programs and equipment to foster a better relationship while improving the competitiveness of our local athletes. It's a win-win situation!"

Saipan Paddling Club,

Napu Outrigger Canoe Club, Marianas Outrigger Club, and Marianas Pacific Paddlers make up the clubs under the NMNPSF.

NMSA has so far floated four options on how the Marianas Cup would proceed. The first option would be Guam hosting as much

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MARK RABAGO

Northern Marianas National Paddle Sports Federation president Justin Andrew, left, poses with Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games Organizing Committee chair Vicente "Ben" Babauta after the blessing of the outrigger canoes last Nov. 19 at Kilili Beach.